

# MARCHING TO A DIFFERENT DRUM



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First published by Trelease Publications

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## Foreword

My interest in this period began with Mary Coate's book *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum*. It became a passion and many other books about Cornwall's involvement now fill my shelves.

The English Civil War, or more properly the British Civil War, was a conflict involving the entire Kingdom. Its true beginnings pre-date the start of the fighting in 1642 by many years and its conclusion stretches well beyond 1646 when this book ends with the story half told.

There may be some surprise that Cornwall played host to so much activity and that its army was so important to the King's initial success but its part has not been overstated or embellished here. The Cornish involvement is faithfully portrayed and the trap of distorting history for the sake of entertainment has been strenuously avoided. It is a true record of the part Cornwall played in this momentous struggle.

*The period of the Civil Wars and Interregnum is the most important in the history of Cornwall, for never before or since has she contributed so largely to the general course of events.*  
(Mary Coate)

Many of the characters really existed and the storyline in no way misrepresents their actions or words. Others are fictional, the product of my imagination, but the parts they play are not beyond the bounds of possibility or even probability. They existed through the lives of many people and they take centre stage in the real-life conflicts.

The Civil War was the story of Royalist supremacy pitted against the new order but here the upper class are relegated to supporting roles, the main characters are the ordinary people who lived and died in these turbulent times.

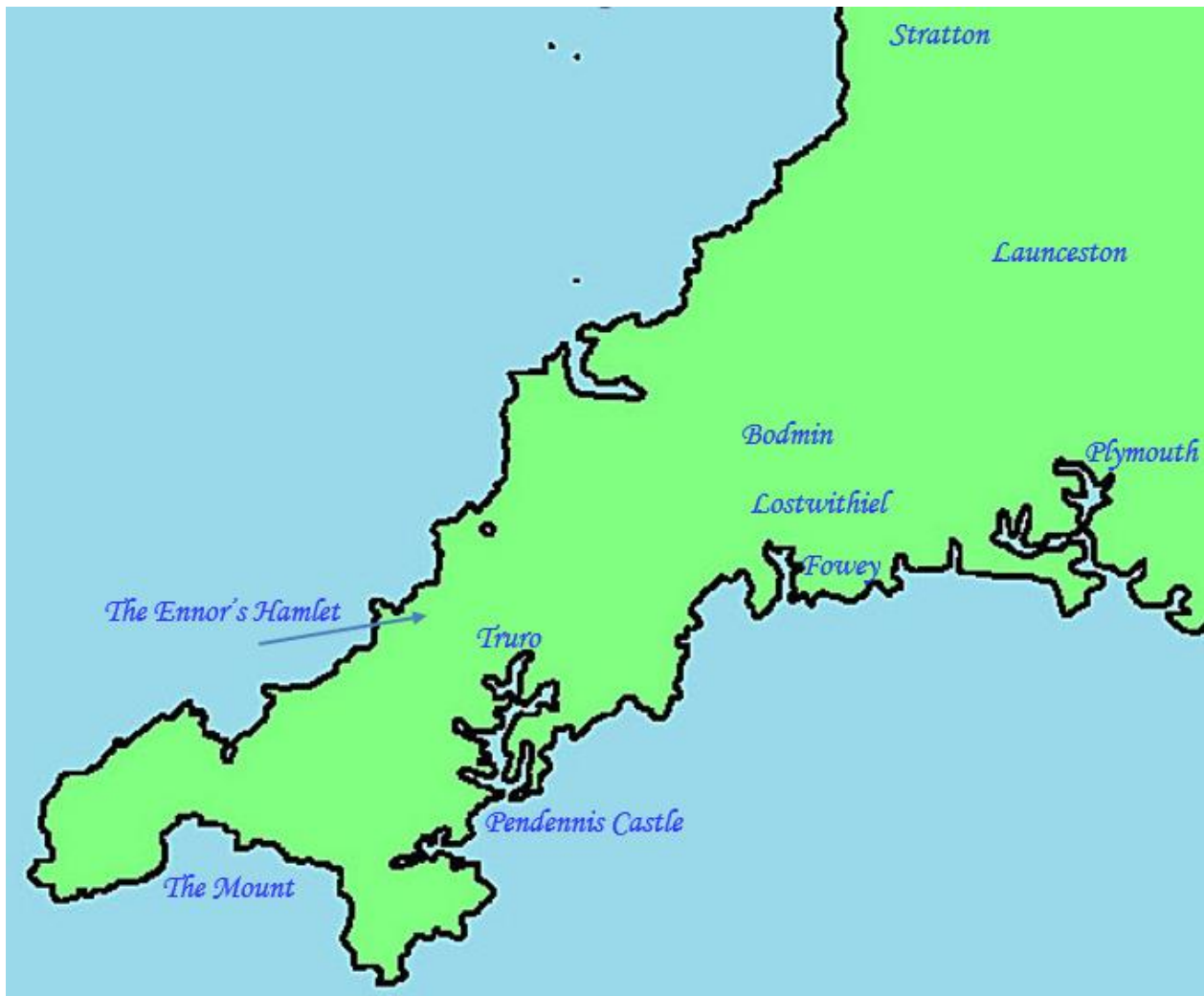
## Introduction

In 1625, King James died and was succeeded by his son, Charles. Both believed in the Divine Rule of Kings and both were passionate defenders of the rule of Bishops in the established church. It brought them into open conflict with their Parliaments and with the growing Puritan movement.

Charles was relentless in his attempt to raise money for his military ventures and in forcing his religious doctrines on a reluctant Scottish nation. His determination to retain absolute power placed him at odds with an evolving Parliament determined to play a greater role in running the country. There could be only one outcome...

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1642, Charles Stuart gazed at his standard as it billowed in the wind. In the distance the storm clouds gathered: a sign of what lay ahead. He'd failed to resolve his differences with Parliament and there was no turning back: the war had begun.

## Chapter 1



Cornish Locations Mentioned

The old woman ladled the mutton stew from the iron pot, her sinewy arms blackened by the smoke. Silhouetted against the flames, she looked like a witch at her cauldron.

“Hold still, stupid girl,” she snapped, “you’ll spill it.” Catherine’s hands shook as the stew splashed her bare arms.

William Ennor shook his head: every mealtime was the same – endless nagging. It had been three months since Irene Dunstan had moved to live with them, the day she’d buried her husband. Her influence had been immediate.

Joan had seen his reaction and she rounded on him. “There’s no need to make your dislike for my mother so obvious William Ennor.”

He sighed, if it wasn’t the mother, it was the daughter. At first, he ignored her but as the mumbling continued, he snapped back. “For God’s sake Woman, shut up. I’ve told you before, she’s too bleddy hard on the children. There’s no need of it.” There was an awkward silence.

William had long concluded that nagging was hereditary: Joan had received the gift from her mother and had taken it to a new level. He tried to avoid quarrels, especially when the children were there. He would retreat into periods of brooding silence but push him too far and he would react. He looked at his wife and then at her mother. They were like sisters: short, with straggly hair and mean faces. God: how he detested

them both. Joan hated him too: he knew that. He often took his meals in the field but today he was working close to home and had come indoors to eat. He wished he hadn't.

He sat at the head of the table and as Catherine placed a bowl in front of him, he smiled: a look of thanks and sympathy.

The four women in his family shared the meal, his wife, their two daughters and, of course, his mother-in-law. He'd been married to Joan for twenty-two years. She'd fallen pregnant and he'd taken her to the altar. If he'd ever loved her, the feeling had died long ago. He couldn't deny that she kept a tidy home and took care of the children but any such feelings were lost in the past. They still slept together but that was as far as it went. Sex had been for having babies: it had nothing to do with love. He had to look elsewhere for that.

His mother-in-law, the old woman as he called her, continued to serve the stew, muttering all the time. Joan glanced up, daring him to comment. He dipped his spoon in the dish. "Stew!" he said, "tis like bleddy dishwater."

Joan's response was immediate. "Are you trying to tell my mother how to make stew?"

He grunted. He'd made his protest but what was the point? What was the point of anything?

The squeals from the far end of the cottage were loud, trying William's patience. "Have you girls fed the pigs?" There was silence. "I thought not. You'd better throw them some scraps: it'll keep them quiet till we've finished." The pigs were useful animals. They ate the leftovers and took up little space. Every so often he killed one: the meat was a special treat for the table, or it earned him some money at the market.

He and Joan had raised four children – two boys and two girls. Five others had died in childhood. Another had been lost in the womb just after they were married, even before Joan had begun to show. "Punishment for being conceived in sin," is what the old woman called it but William's father had known better.

"She wod'n never pregnant Boy: trapped you she did. See now, they did'n have nothin' and she was desperate for a husband."

Joan was still in the mood for a fight and her voice jolted him back to the table. "You should show my mother more respect. Look at this hovel we live in, do you think she enjoys being here? It was for our sake she moved in and we should be grateful to her. You know she could do better, her being related to the Bassets of Tehidy."

William grinned, "I know, she never stops telling us. Praps if she were to call on her precious Bassets, they'd take her in."

"That's just like you William Ennor. You know they don't want to know her. Don't you think it hurts enough without you making fun of her?"

William winked at his eldest daughter. The old woman had been born out of wedlock, her mother had worked for the Basset family and when she'd fallen pregnant, they'd sent her away.

Not another word was spoken and William was glad when it was time to start work again. He grabbed a pitcher of ale and slouched out of the door. Even ploughing was preferable to this. He walked by the furze rick, between the cesspool and the dung pile, and on to where the oxen were waiting. There was anger in his every step. What I'd give to be rid of those two crones, he thought. He forced himself to calm down,

think of other things – of someone else. He looked at the plough and the beasts that pulled it: how many times had he worked this strip of land? That was what life was all about, you work hard, raise a family and then your sons take over and raise theirs.

William was a tall, well-built man, his body honed by years of hard work. He'd been born back in 1603, the same year that James had become King of England. He was from a peasant family: generations had lived in this little hamlet on the north coast of Cornwall, a part of Tywarnhayle Manor. It's where his children were born and God willing, their children would be as well.

It was a small community. The nearest church was in the churchtown but their tiny manor chapelry served those who preferred not to make that journey. Here, there was Delbridge's little shop and an alehouse where the men met for a drink and to hear news of the wider world. William and the other farmers took their corn to the manor mill at the bottom of the hill and tomorrow it was his turn to clear the weed from the leat that carried the water for the waterwheel. It was a condition of his tenancy that he had to use the mill, a practice from times past.

Morley Roscrow looked over the hedge, "How's it going then, winning are you?" He was deaf so every conversation was a shouting match.

William moved closer. "Not bad Morley, I'm getting there but the bleddy plough's playing up, one of the bars is broken. I ought to take it out to Ben but I can't spare the time." Benjamin Parker was the smithy: he'd been making and repairing tools for nearly fifty years. "Praps I'll go tomorrow," he said.

The old man shook his head. He was always ready with advice but seldom led by example. "Now commus on William, you know you ought take it out there now, he'll only get worse."

"I know you're right Morley. Hell, I've spent some hours out there with Ben, watching and helping. When we were boys, we'd love to see him bring his forge to life with a few squeezes of his bellows. We'd watch the metal change colour as it got hotter and hotter. There were four of us who played together, now I can hardly remember them. Two were killed in the mines and one moved away, to Redruth I think."

"Tis all changing too fast for me William. See now, I'm nearly seventy and I can't keep up with it. In my day we all spoke the same but now tis this English trade. I tellee what Boy, in another generation it'll all be gone."

William laughed. "You'll have to move down west Morley, tis all they speak down there."

"Move? Hell, I wouldn't move from here, not at my time of life. Here, I know what I was going to ask you. They do say there's going be trouble, 'tween the King and Parliament. They reckon it could come to a fight."

"Well, I've heard a bit about it. It's the talk of the alehouse and the parson preached about it in his sermon a few Sundays back. He said 'twas our duty to support the King and I think he's right. I know which side I'll be on if it comes to a fight. I don't trust Parliament and there's no way I'm going to lift a finger against King Charles. Anyway, Nathaniel Mohun's bound to support him and he'll expect us to do the same, just like most of Cornwall will."

"You could be right, but I reckon there's many a man who won't, 'specially they lot up-country. They may not like Parliament but they hate the King. They say he's a stubborn bugger. He reckons he's appointed by God and we're his to do with as he likes. They do say that the Queen's dances cost thousands of pounds."

William shrugged, apart from his loyalty to Lord Mohun, he was a King's man, if he said he was appointed by God then he believed him. "Now come on Morley, you wouldn't be thinking of siding with they there Puritans would you?"

"No, no. I'm a good churchman, I couldn't do that but there are they that will. I don't think it's as certain as you're saying. I can't say I'm too keen on him but I'm still on his side. There again, I don't know that I want to fight for him."

"I doubt it'll come to that Morley, not at your age." There'd been many such comments in the alehouse but William had done well under the King and wouldn't waver. "See now Morley, I can't complain. I'm a tenant farmer and that's more than my father and grandfather were. They worked on the manor but neither of them rented land of their own."

"I knew them both," said Morley, "good men they were, and loyal too. I know I won't have to fight and I hope you don't either. Anyway, I'd best get on: now you get over to see Ben before that plough gets any worse."

William waved and turned back to his work. The land was dry but it was good soil, meat earth as they called it. The dust blew in his face as he took up the plough and shouted to the lead horse. The light-grey creature was old but wise enough to head the pair of oxen, one either side of the tow-beam. The horse may have been more intelligent and responsive but it was the cattle which provided the power. They also provided meat and from their milk, Joan made cheese, butter and whitsoul. Even the dung was precious as manure and when the animals died, their bones were crushed and spread on the fields. William whipped the team to life and the animals moved off, cutting through the ground with ease. There was a lot of ploughing to be done if they were to have a crop this year.

William's proud boast was that he'd always managed to feed his family, but farming was hard work. There was ploughing, hedges to build and fields to dress with wood ash, sand and seaweed. The farm was mostly pasture: cattle and sheep in the main, but now he was doing tillage as well. He grew some wheat, oats and a bit of barley for the ale.

Ploughing was tedious but it gave him time to think – about the farm, his family and about his Ann. There was his mother too. She lived in a small cottage next to the Manor where she kept house for the Mohuns. He visited her regularly but seldom stayed long, it gave him an excuse to get away – to visit Ann. Joan had taken him by surprise when she'd asked if he knew Ann Tregay. It had left him wondering if she suspected anything but she'd seemed satisfied with his reply. He reached the end of yet another furrow and as he turned, he spotted his younger son, John, trudging along the hedge towards him. Of all his children it was John who most tried his patience. He was different from his older brother, short in stature and quick in temper. At times he wondered if he was really his. He'd shrugged off such thoughts, as if anyone else would want to bed Joan. The farm was too much for one man and William had kept John at home to work with him.

"What's on then Boy, finished pulling weeds have you?"

"All done Father and now I'm going fishing. It'll keep the old bag happy if I catch something for the pot."

"That's no way to talk about your grandmother, you're glad enough to eat her cooking."

"Sorry Father, I'd forgotten you're so fond of her."

"That's enough of your cheek. Alright, you can go, but before you do I want two buckets brought up from the river and don't be home late for your meal."

John was careful not to say where he was going, nor that the fish wouldn't be biting. Fetching the water was a small price to pay for a few hours of freedom.

William shook the reins and the horse and oxen plodded off to cut another furrow across the field.

John's brother, Richard, was more like his father: tall, muscular, dark and quiet. He had a fine head of wavy hair, just like William before baldness set in. He'd worked at the mine for seven years, since he was ten and after a couple of years breaking rock, he'd been sent below to learn the skills of a tin miner.

Richard knew that his younger brother wanted to join him in the mine and did his best to put him off. "It's bloody hard graft and by the time you climb down the ladder, break rocks all day and then haul the ore back to the shaft, your back's near to breaking."

"But you're free. Father won't accept that I've grown up. He tells me what to do and what to think. I've got to get away."

Richard shook his head, "Maybe you're right but you don't want to go down the mine. Sometimes I can hear the ground groaning just like it's waiting to give way. At the end of the core you're almost too tired to climb back up. I've seen a man fall down the shaft when a rung on the ladder gave way. The scream was terrible: it only stopped when he hit the side. Then there was silence, till the splash. I tell you, you want to keep away from it."

"I don't care what you say, I'm going to see James Treleigh to see if he'll take me on."

"Treleigh! Hell, you want to keep away from him. He's a right bastard. Only last week one of the men came up from below and found his young daughter crying. Her job was breaking the ore and feeding the stamps. She'd been lashed with a horsewhip. According to the Captain, James Treleigh had done it. He reckoned she wasn't working fast enough but the truth is he'd tried to grope her but she'd fought him off. That's why he thrashed her. No man should be able to do that and get away with it." John nodded but his mind was made up, one day he would follow his brother into the mine.

John was fifteen, two years younger than Richard, then came Catherine who was fourteen and thirteen-year-old Ruth, William's little darling. The girls worked for a local gentry family but lived at home and helped their mother with the animals and the butter making. William was proud of them. Both had dark complexions and good looks, a bit of Spanish blood according to him. He knew that the young men of the area had their eyes on them: within a season or two they would be off his hands.

Joan ran the household but ever since her mother arrived, she'd spent more time on the land. Most of the family's food came from the farm with any surplus sold in the local market. Occasionally there was meat on the table but it was mostly fish, vegetables and black barley bread, baked on the open fire.

The cottage was a bit cramped for seven people but they managed. It had one large room where they cooked and ate. The earth floor was covered with straw and sand and the pigs lived at one end, on the other side of a low dividing wall. The chickens wandered wherever took their fancy and had to be pushed off the table at meal times. The cottage was about ten feet high and just above head height was a rough staging, a talfat, where the family slept on beds of straw. William had fixed a few boards above their heads, to protect them from rat droppings and insects as they slept. The rustling in the thatch left no doubt that they shared the cottage with other creatures. Joan kept the fire going all the time, for cooking and heating the house, and whenever the wood and furze was low, she would nag William until he fetched more. The turf rick too was important and when it dwindled, he and the boys would set out for the moor, furze hook in hand, to cut a fresh batch.

William looked across from where he was working. The swirling wind sucked the smoke through the opening in the roof and tossed it in all directions. Joan had called it a hovel but they were far better off than some. His father had built it and it had served them well. He watched the girls feeding the pigs and guessed it was nearly mealtime. Soon, Richard would be walking along the lane on his way home from work. William had left it too late to visit Ann.

## Chapter 2

A few months earlier the King had issued his Commissions of Array, a call to arms. Twenty or so local gentlemen had been appointed to recruit men to his cause. Most were from Cornwall's leading families: John Grylls the Sheriff, Warwick Lord Mohun, Sir William Wrey, Sir John Trelawny, Sir William Courtney, Sir Nicholas Slanning, Sir Bevil Grenville, Sir Peter Courtney, John Arundell Jnr of Trefice, and Charles Trevanion. They'd already been busy.

It was a month later when a local Parliamentary faction travelled to London. They returned with orders to implement the Militia Ordinance, to assemble a Cornish Parliamentary army.

The two sides set out their case at the Launceston Assizes in early August. The Royalists were better organised and better connected and when the Reverend Nicholas Hatch opened the session, he preached a sermon in which he declared for the King. Sir Richard Buller and Sir Alexander Carew could see the way it was going and tried to forestall the Royalist moves but the judge ruled against them. The Royalists had won the first round and they began to enlist all those men who were fit and able to fight.

News of the Assize hadn't spread as far as the little alehouse where the Ennors lived but all those who gathered there knew of Cornishmen who'd been sent to Scotland to fight for the King – in what was known as the Bishops' Wars. William refused to be drawn when the King was blamed for taking men who were needed for the harvest or to keep the mines clear of water.

William visited Churchtown each week. There was usually a bit of business to attend to and it gave him a chance to visit a busier alehouse and catch up on the news. It was a fine day as he made his way through the two valleys between his little hamlet and the Churchtown. He trudged up the steep hill and the three gables and spire of the church came into view. Generations of his family had attended there, in the past as Catholics and now as staunch members of the Church of England. Things had changed during the Reformation but here, life had continued much as before. The vicar, Michael Stuckey, stood in the doorway, he waved to William and walked out to meet him.

"I've not seen you at church for a few weeks William. No doubt you've been attending your own chapelry though."

"I have Vicar, I never miss."

"And your family, are they well? I caught sight of your two daughters the other day, they're growing into fine maidens."

"They are, and not a bit of trouble. Actually, I'm glad I've seen you." William glanced around to make sure he couldn't be overheard. "I wanted to talk to you about my son, John."

"A fine-looking young man as I recall but then again, I often confuse your two boys."



“Oh his brother’s no trouble, he works in the mine and helps me when he can. No, it’s John, the younger one. I’m worried about him. See, it’s these troubles across the country. I’m afraid he may join the rebels.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, I know your own way of thinking and it’s very much mine. Disloyalty to the King is disloyalty to God and I fear for John’s soul in the next life as much as I do for his neck in this. I’ll pray for him but you must keep him on a tight rein, in case it reflects on us all. Ask him to come and see me.”

William felt better, he would talk to John, tell him to see the vicar.

Churchtown was busy, people buying and selling, dogs running in the square, horses waiting for their masters. Smoke trailed skywards from every cottage. One of the thatched roofs was smouldering and men were scurrying around with buckets of water to dampen it down. A middle-aged woman stood in the alleyway. She waved, perhaps in hope. He’d visited her a few times before he’d met Ann. Now though, he was embarrassed at her attention. The open door of the tavern looked inviting and William was thirsty after his long walk. He enjoyed his ale, particularly something a little stronger than Joan’s brew. He walked up the steps to the door and went inside: it looked deserted. He bought a drink and sat in one of the high-backed seats. It was good to have a break from work. Within a short while, he felt a thud to his back: someone had sat down heavily behind him. There were two men by the sound of it, both well spoken. One was loud, a bit like William after a few ales: he seemed unaware that William was there.

It was clear that they were Royalists and one of them made no secret of his Catholic leanings. Every so often, the younger man implored him to speak more quietly and for a while he did but after a few whispered comments, his voice became louder again. Cornwall had moved on since the days of the Prayer Book Rebellion but many still harboured a few regrets at the loss of the old religious ritual.

With no other distractions, he could hear every word of their conversation. “I tell you now Father, it’ll do you no good to talk so boldly of your Catholicism. Fear of Rome drives many to side with Parliament, even in Cornwall.”

“Huh! You disgust me Boy. You were brought up Catholic and now you’ve deserted the true faith and for what, a watered-down religion that can’t make up its mind which way it wants to go. I sometimes wonder if you intend joining the Puritans.”

“That’s nonsense Father, and you know it. I’ll defend the English Church from the enemy within but I’ll also resist any return to Popery.”

It was quiet for a few seconds and then the older man spoke again. “I thought for a while that Archbishop Laud had the right idea. He seemed to be turning back to the true religion but your Puritans had their way with him.”

“Look Father, they’re not my Puritans. Many want to keep the church in its present form, they fear Laud and a return to rule by Rome as much as they do the Puritans.”

“My son, the Cornish may have adopted Protestantism but it was only after a struggle. You mark my words, many favour a higher form of church, and what is that but Catholicism.”

“Yours is an old fight, you may long for another Bloody Mary but it won’t happen. The Catholic dream died when they failed to blow up King James and his Parliament.”

“More’s the pity. The country would be in a better state if they’d succeeded.”

“Quiet Father, that’s no way to talk. Charles is different and the country will rise for him.”

“If you mean Cornwall then I’m sure you’re right but what of the rest of the country. Our cause often differs from England: past rebellions have taught us that. Even so, our support will be out of love for the monarchy, not Charles Stuart.”

“Well whatever the reason, he’ll win. Parliament will bring anarchy: can you imagine the military in the hands of John Pym?”

There was a moment’s silence before the older man replied. “Look Boy, I’ve had a few more years’ experience than you and know enough to guard against overconfidence. There is much wrong with this country and there are many who seek a new order because of the King. The taxes are crippling and his treatment of John Eliot was appalling. The wars have left us penniless and the coastal defences fail to protect us from the Turkish pirates. Tis no wonder Buckingham was murdered and Wentworth was sent to the block.”

“I think you’ve said enough Father. For all his faults, Charles is our King and Cornwall will stand by him.”

“I’m sure you’re right and included in them will be a good many Catholics and a few Puritans too.” The younger man stood up and strode to the bar. As he waited, he turned and spotted William, a look of surprise filled his face.

“You Sir, are you listening to our conversation?”

William nodded. “It would be difficult not to, your companion seems intent on giving the world his opinions.”

“And where do you stand Sir? Would you quarrel with him?”

William bristled. “I would not, but I’ll quarrel with you if you take that tone with me.”

“Such lack of respect for your betters makes you sound like a rebel.” The man reached for his sword but William was already on his feet and with one swing of his powerful arm he hit him in the midriff. The man dropped like a bag of corn and William turned to the older man. “I warn you not to draw your blade Sir, or I’ll do the same with you. I suggest that in future you keep your opinions to yourself and teach your son better manners.”

As William walked to the door a mocking applause came from the other end of the room. “Well said William Ennor.”

William turned and walked towards the man. “And who may you be?”

“A friend, William, just a friend. I too was tired of their conversation. Will you join me for a drink?”

William had a lot to think about as he made his way home. The two men hadn’t bothered him but the stranger had talked of lovers of Parliament, of conspirators against the King.

### Chapter 3

#### There’s Talk of War

“William! Your meal’s ready.” Joan’s shrill voice interrupted his thoughts. He stopped work and headed for the cottage. She was a good provider but impatient. My God, she was impatient.

Before the meal they all stood as William said a prayer. John had not yet returned.

“They say there’s going to be a war. Is it right?” There was both fear and excitement in Catherine’s question.

Her younger sister looked fearful, “It won’t come here, will it?”

“Never you mind about such things,” said Joan, “war is for men to take care of. I spose John’s been filling your head with such talk.”

Joan’s words did little to comfort the girls and William ignored her as he gave his reply. “I doubt Parliament will take up arms against our King and even if it does then no one will dare invade Cornwall.” In fact William did fear a conflict. Stories of atrocities in Germany and Ireland had spread and he feared that once it started, it would race across the country. Parliament was determined to undermine the existing order and there was no knowing what soldiers would do when enflamed. There were stories of killing and rape and he feared for his daughters if the fighting came to their hamlet. He smiled inwardly as he imagined them attacking his wife: he doubted they would have much success.

“Will you fight, Father?”

Joan replied on his behalf. “Yes, he’ll fight.”

William took a sip of his ale. “Yes, I’ll fight. Charles Stuart is our lawful King and I’ll gladly take up arms for him.”

Catherine was eager to know more, excited at the possibility of some action. “What about Richard and John, will they fight too?”

“Richard will fight with me but John’s too young. If there is a war then it won’t last long enough for him to take part.”

The old woman had heard enough, she liked to eat in silence. “That’s enough you girls, get on with your food.”

William reacted to the comment. “It’s good that they’re interested and that I should answer as honestly as I can.”

“And what have you told them?” snapped Joan. “What do you know of such things that you can take away their fear?” Her comments were stinging. As ever, she was driven by support for her mother. “I’ve told you girls already, leave the talk of war to the men.”

Silence came to the table: Joan’s comments had prevailed yet again. Just then the door swung open and John rushed in to take his seat at the table.

“Where’ve you been?” asked William.

“You said I could try for fish and now you ask where I’ve been.”

“You’ve been fishing till this hour? Well, what did you catch?”

"I'd no luck at all, others were pulling them ashore but I couldn't tempt them."

Joan's voice was full of sarcasm as she joined in, "The sea is teeming with fish and you catch nothing. Who were the others who were so successful?"

John stammered, "I...I didn't know them, I think they were from the porth."

The old woman joined in the attack. "The boy's a liar, he's not been fishing any more than I have. He's been off seeing some maid. He'll bring trouble to this house – you mark my words."

Joan's eyes flashed, "Your grandmother's right, you've been seeing your little whore again. I've told you before you don't want nothin' to do with her, the bitch will trap you. She'll say she's having your baby whether she is or she isn't."

William looked at his wife and the years of resentment welled up inside him. "And you'd know all about that wouldn't you?" He'd never accused her before and now, in front of her mother, he'd come out with what he'd thought for years. Joan turned away and he knew he was right. Nor was there any surprise in her mother's face, the trap had been a joint plan. "Well good luck to him is what I say, enjoy yourself before you're brought to this."

There was silence, all stunned by William's harsh words, so out of character but stronger for it.

"John, say your prayers."

"I have Mother, and I've not been with any girl, I've been to Churchtown."

"Maybe you have but you've been up to no good." The old woman was determined to have the final word.

Catherine broke the silence. "We've been talking about the war. Father and Richard are going away to fight."

"What war, who are they going to fight?"

Ruth jumped in. "There's going to be a war between Charles Stuart and his Parliament and we're going to be on the King's side."

"Well I aren't. You won't catch me fighting for him. If I have to fight it'll be for Parliament."

"You'll do no such thing," said Joan, "You'll fight with your father and brother. Wherever do you get these ideas?"

For once William agreed with his wife, "You'll keep such talk to yourself Boy. I'll hear none of it."

John was determined to have his say and directed his comments to his sisters. "Father will fight for the love of a king who treats us like dirt and taxes everything we do. Is that what you want? Richard will fight the way he's told."

Richard's reaction was immediate, he was angry at being drawn into the argument. "I can speak for myself. My reasons may not be the same as Father's but at least we're on the same side."

“Well I have reasons too, and a conscience, and I’ll not be told who I’m to fight for. The King’s a tyrant and I’ll play no part in protecting him.”

The old woman held her head and moaned, “I can’t take no more,” she said, “they’ll hang us all if he doesn’t stop.”

Ruth began to whimper and in a quiet voice William said, “I want to know who you see at Churchtown.”

John didn’t reply and William asked again, his voice still quiet but with a tremor.

“It’s not what Mother says, it’s not a girl.”

“Well if it’s not your whore then tell us who it is,” sneered Joan.

John was about to snap back at his mother but his father was in full flow. “I’ll ask you again and this time I want an answer. Who do you see there?”

“I can’t say, I’m sorry.”

“It’s something to do with this talk of conscience, isn’t it? Someone’s putting ideas into your head.”

John said nothing.

Suddenly a huge fist crashed down onto the table scattering the food and bowls. Even Joan and her mother recoiled. With a voice that shook the roof, William shouted, “I’ll not be defied in my own house, you’ll tell me now or you’ll not take one step off this land till you do.”

John shook his head, “I’m sorry, I can’t say.”

William was breathing heavily and took a moment to regain his composure. He already knew the answer, from the stranger in the alehouse. He would talk to John later.

The meal continued in silence, each with their own thoughts. “Right you girls, you can clear the table,” barked the old woman. William hated her giving orders but said nothing.

The two boys thanked their mother for the meal and went outside. Richard was angry and wanted to sort it out. “John, I’ve no wish to fall out with you but your quarrel was with Father, there was no need to involve me.”

“I’m sorry Richard, it was done in a moment. They were pushing me and I was angry. I won’t do it again.”

Richard nodded. “I’ve no other wish than we should remain good friends whatever our differences.”

“What differences? We’ve grown up together and I know you better than any man. Our beliefs have always been the same, of a new order, of freedom. You’re not a King’s man. You can see what he’s doing to our country, to our people. Why would you take up arms to defend him?”

Richard hesitated. “Perhaps tis a step too far for me. We’re surrounded by people who’ll flock to his side and I’ve no wish to become a stranger to my friends.”

“And for that you’d deny your conscience?” The comment hurt and Richard lowered his eyes. “John Pym’s a reasonable man, just listen to what he says and you’ll see that this is our chance, our moment to throw off the shackles and put the power into the hands of the people.”

Richard frowned, “This talk of power. You won’t have a vote. It’ll just be a change from the monarchy to the landed gentry, there’ll be no place for the likes of us in this new order.”

“No Richard, you’re wrong. If only I can make you see.”

“I see well enough. I see Cornwall being destroyed by those who’d take it for themselves, just like in the past. There’s talk of invasion and I’m scared, not for myself but for Cornwall. As far as I’m concerned, it’s Saxon against Celt. We’ve little enough left to call our own and I won’t let them take that. I may not fight for King Charles as a man but I’ll fight for what good his rule will bring to Cornwall.” Richard paused, “Now shake hands and swear we’ll remain friends whatever the outcome.”

John took his hand. They embraced and Richard went back inside. William was some distance away, not close enough to hear the conversation but he’d seen the show of affection.

John remained outside sitting on the ground, head in hands. He so believed in the men of Parliament. Why couldn’t Richard see it his way?

## Chapter 4

Ann was different to any other woman William had known, she would talk with him as a friend and then, when the moment was right, she would take him to her bed.

Now, as he lay there, she slowly removed her clothes, her every movement intended to please. She was in her late thirties and her figure had grown a little fuller but in William’s eyes that made her even more attractive. He watched as she gently offered her large breasts and moved her hands over her body. His large, rough hands took over and she moaned as he caressed her in the way she’d taught him. At the right moment she turned her attention to him, aware that his enjoyment would only serve to increase hers. She teased him at first, she understood the art of arousal, and then she gasped, “Now William.” He responded.

They talked for a while after making love, he was anxious to show it was more than just sex. He’d told her so many times that he loved her, something he’d never said to Joan. She knew the difficulties but that didn’t stop her longing for the time when they would be together. They made love again before he left her bed and then he rushed back to his home. He hated leaving.

It was quiet when he arrived at the cottage: everyone had gone to bed. The old woman stirred in her chair beside the smoky fire. She was unable to climb the rough ladder that led to the sleeping area. The cottage was such a contrast to Ann’s: he thought again of his feelings as he lay down. A grunt and a fart from Joan made him long for the day when he would leave her.

## Chapter 5

By August 1642, both sides were recruiting but the response was poor. “Well, stands to reason,” said one of William’s drinking friends, “tis harvest time and that’s more important than any bleddy king.” William bristled but was relieved that there was to be a truce until after the corn was carried.

“Anyway,” said one of the others, “I don’t reckon Parliament’s Militia Ordinance or the King’s Commission of Array is legal.” It was one of the clerks from the nearby mine, known for having an answer to everything.

“Now, how would you know that?” said William. “You sure you’re not just trying to get out of fighting?”

It was in danger of getting out of hand and only calmed down when the barman threatened to stop serving. Quite apart from the legality, some boroughs had been in discussion with both sides and had still not decided which to support. After all, it was possible the conflict may be resolved without a fight.

The Parliamentarians had been slow to recruit, apart from in the east, particularly around Saltash where Sir Richard Buller was building his army. He’d fortified the town and was preparing to fight.

The first skirmish of the war was in September 1642, at Powick Bridge near Worcester. A troop of Parliamentary dragoons under Colonel John Brown had blundered into a party led by the King’s nephew, Prince Rupert. They were routed.

## Chapter 6

### Truro For The King

William was pulling weeds when he heard Joan shout. He called back but there was no reply. “Bleddy woman,” he moaned, “she must have heard me.” He trudged in to find out what she wanted. With any luck her mother was dead.

As he walked through the door, he could see the old woman sitting by the fire: his prayer hadn’t been answered. Joan looked solemn. “It’s started,” she said, “Some man called Hopton has gone to Grenville’s house at Stowe and now they’re making their way down to Truro, to try and get the town to side with the King. You’ll have to go to support his Lordship.”

Sir Ralph Hopton had been a moderate opponent of the King, a member of the Popular Party, but when the time came to choose sides, he couldn’t bring himself to raise his sword against him. He’d arrived from Somerset with about 100 horse and fifty dragoons. Grenville knew that Buller intended to hold a muster at Bodmin on the 28<sup>th</sup> September and he and Hopton headed for Wadebridge. They needed more men and at St Columb they raised another 1,000. From there they marched to Castle an Dinas and on the 27<sup>th</sup> September they entered Bodmin. The next day they moved out onto the downs to attack Buller but he’d gone – to Launceston. With a tinge of disappointment they disbanded the posse and headed for Truro.

“I expect they’ll want the trained band,” said William. “I’ll take Richard with me.”

“You’d better take John as well or we’ll never hear the last of it.”

“No, I’ll leave him here. I don’t want him there with his funny ideas.”

“You’ll take him with you. Otherwise he’ll be off to Churchtown while you’re away.” William shrugged: he would take John with him.

The next day the three men rose early and rushed to complete the essential work. “That’ll do Boys. The rest will keep till we get back.” A quick bite to eat and they were off. Truro was a walk of about seven miles. If William had been going alone then he would’ve taken the nag but with only one horse on the

farm, they went on foot. John had been there before, when he was about eight years old. He remembered it as a busy place with market stalls. There had been bull baiting, cock fighting and men taking bets on every corner. It was home to about a thousand people, most not to be trusted according to his father. Still fresh in his mind were the large tucking mills with clanking waterwheels, like man-made monsters, the busy quayside where he would've sailed away on one of the ships given half a chance, and the cruelty, a man tied to the back of a cart and whipped all the way around the streets. He remembered the anger from the crowd at the treatment of one of their own. The man had taken a handful of bread to feed his starving family and was being punished in the name of the King. That had remained in John's mind.

The outskirts were quiet. They walked down Street Pydar, the steep hill that led from the north. The old castle was to their right and on the left were the new almshouses: the door to the courtyard was closed. This was the fashionable area of the town, smart houses with gardens that ran down to the river.

"That's St Mary's Church," shouted William. The streets were busier and they had to push their way through the crowd. There was a babble of voices, some buying, some selling: men, women and children running around, helping customers. All along the street there were tradesmen displaying their handiwork: chairs, stools, tables, whatever was needed.

To their left was Lord Robartes' Great House: it occupied the entire end of the block, its front facing Market Street and its back to St Mary's. It was tall, higher than the others, three floors plus an attic, a grand building befitting one of the great commercial leaders of the town. But it was his other activity that interested John Ennor. John Robartes was the leading Cornish Parliamentarian.

They made their way down towards the Market House at the end of Middle Row: the smell of fish wafted towards them. It was noisy, farmers selling their goods and tradesmen offering their services. The market was open sided with granite pillars supporting the council chamber, where the town business was carried out and where concerts and dances were held. Today, armed soldiers mixed with the crowd. It all seemed unreal to the young country boy.

Away to the right, along St Nicholas Street, there was a commotion. "No John, stay here," shouted William but he was already heading that way. "Bleddy boy," he said and pushed his way through the crowd. Ahead of them was West Bridge: it crossed the waters of the Dower Ythy, near where it was joined by the mill leat. A crowd had gathered around a small party of dragoons on horseback and were goading the horses, trying to push them into the river. They snorted and stamped their hooves, churning up dust from the ground.

"They're Grenville's men," shouted William, "you can tell by their colours." The soldiers had drawn their swords and were threatening anyone who approached: William reached out and pulled John back. "Bleddy townies," he said, referring to the rabble. "They're rebels. It could be that the town will hold for Parliament." Like the rest of Cornwall, Truro had yet to decide who to support. John Rolle and Francis Rous, the town's members of Parliament, supported John Pym but they were away in London and wouldn't influence today's proceedings. Both Parliament and the Crown had widespread support across Cornwall and many of the Cornish gentry had already declared their allegiance – the split was fairly even. Some family names appeared on both sides: in those houses it was destined to be brother against brother. William glanced at John and wondered if that would apply to his family.

The troopers managed to break away and make for the town centre. There had been no bloodshed but plenty of anger and a few people had been knocked to the ground. John stood by the narrow wooden bridge and looked at the water rushing under it. Back up the river, birds and small animals scavenged in the rubbish that littered its muddy banks. West Bridge was one of the main entrances to the town – from Street Kenwyn. It was only wide enough for pedestrians and packhorses: the heavier traffic forded the river. The three men turned and made their way back along St Nicholas Street: it was long and narrow and



ran from West Bridge all the way to the quayside. To their left was Middle Row, an old block of shops and houses, a prime position for all sorts of traders. As they neared the end of the row they could see the prison: it faced the Coinage Hall and William said, "I pity anyone in the stocks today, he'll make good sport for this crowd."

Opposite Middle Row, on the right, was the Bull Inn, a favourite drinking place for businessmen. It was busy and William shouted, "We'll never get in there. We'll try somewhere quieter when this is over."

William, Richard and John joined a crowd in front of the Market House where Sir Richard Vyvyan of Trelowarren was trying to make a speech. It was noisy but he managed to make himself heard. He told them that James Denyell, the outgoing mayor, had refused to commit the trained band to the King. He spoke of the dangers of supporting Parliament and implored the people to rise in defence of Truro and Cornwall. "Your lives," he said, "will be in danger if you don't obey the Sheriff and the Justices." It was an impressive speech, all the more because he was an important, local man. It was also of help that he was supported by Hopton's soldiers.

As he stepped down, the new mayor, John Michell, pledged his support for the King and agreed to release the town's arms for his cause. The trained band was ordered to prepare and be ready to march in defence of Cornwall.

William couldn't hide his delight. "That'll teach they damn rebels," he said. The look on John's face didn't escape him. "Disappointed Boy? I spose you wanted Truro to follow Plymouth and Exeter." There was no reply.

John wanted some time to himself, away from his gloating father, but William was reluctant to let him wander the streets alone. Eventually he agreed but with a warning not to trust the townies. "We'll meet you at the Bear Inn, near East Bridge, in two hours. Don't be late."

As its name implied, East Bridge was at the eastern entrance to the town, it spanned the River Allen where it passed under Bridge Street. The Dower Ythy and the Allen formed the boundaries of the most densely populated part of the town.

John made his way through one of the opes, the little alleyways which ran from street to street. They were handy shortcuts for adults and adventure playgrounds for children. The leats were fascinating, the busy water roared down through the narrow man-made channel to turn the huge waterwheels. From there he made his way along St Mary's Church at the back of Robartes' Great House. As he turned into Street Idden, a short cut to Market Street, two women approached. They smiled but lost interest when he said he had no money.

He cut through Middle Row and then on to Back Quay where the Dower Ythy met the tidal waters. A little further down it would join the River Allen and begin the long journey down to the British Sea. Back Quay was a hive of activity, boats arriving and others being prepared for departure. Men drinking in the inns and others busy loading and unloading all sorts of goods: travel by water was much easier than overland.

A scruffy character with an arm in a sling caught John's eye. Every so often the man sidled up to someone and slipped his arm from its support. John was intrigued: he was a pickpocket. As he approached his next victim John shouted, "Watch out Mister, he's a thief."

Both men turned in surprise, one cursing and the other thankful. A cane crashed down onto the thief and he fell to the ground, head in hands. The man kicked at him but he rolled away, off the quay and into the river. No one attempted to help him but after a few frantic heaves he made it to the steps on the other bank. There were howls of laughter and jeers as he ran off shaking his fist.

“Thank you Boy,” said the gentleman, “here, buy yourself a drink.” John flipped the coin and put it in his pocket, he was in profit. He thought about the whores he’d seen earlier but it would soon be time to head for East Bridge.

Bridge Street was busy but the alehouse there seemed as good as any. It was near the back of St Mary’s Church, where they’d agreed to meet John. The Bear Inn was crowded and William and Richard had to push their way to the front to be served. One man turned to confront them but thought better of it when he saw how big they were.

“Easy friend,” said William, “we just want an ale.” The man nodded and stood to one side.

Ale was not the only thing on offer: the taverns were common gathering places for whores on busy days. William slurped his ale as he and Richard made their way to one of the tables. “Not bad,” he said, “better than your mother’s brew.”

Richard nodded but his attention was focussed on a man moving three tankards across a table, taking bets from people trying to guess where he’d hidden a bean. No matter how much they studied his hands they always made the wrong choice. Richard decided to chance his luck. He placed his wager on the table and pointed to one of the tankards. It was no surprise that he was wrong.

“Here Mister,” a voice came from over his shoulder, “you’re a bleddy cheat, you just stole the boy’s money.” The man leaned forward and tipped over the table. The trickster quickly gathered his things and ran off, laughter ringing in his ears.

“I bet he’s off to the next tavern,” said Richard picking up a couple of coins from the floor. He’d doubled his money.

It was noisy and every so often someone bumped into them. After a few times Richard turned in anger but William grabbed his arm, “Easy Boy, this is no place to start a fight. Three of us came to Truro and I want three to go home.” Richard nodded.

The arguments were heated, mostly about the troubles and the speech at Market House. Some were rational while others were loud and animated, clearly fuelled by alcohol. From one it was Charles the defender while from another it was Charles the Papist. The support seemed evenly balanced. Some of the talk was slurred and it was clear that a few had been there for a while. Richard suppressed a smile.

“Careful,” said his father, “you don’t want to get drawn into this lot.”

There was a loud shout from behind them and ale flew in all directions as a tankard slammed down onto the table. “Well he’s poking a bleddy French Catholic and if that don’t prove it then I don’t know what does.”

“It don’t prove nothin’, he locked up that Archbishop Laud didn’t he? He’s a Catholic, well, near ‘nough.”

“It wasn’t him who locked him up you bleddy idiot, it was Parliament. I tell you he’s no bleddy good to this country: he’s draining us dry with his bleddy taxes. As soon as he was made king, he was busy dreaming up new ways to take my money. Well I’ve had enough. I aren’t going to keep paying to keep him and his bleddy whore in style.” Richard had heard much the same from John, of how Sir John Eliot and William Coryton of St Mellion had been jailed for failing to pay.

“So you reckon Parliament will treat us better do you? Hah, you mark my words Mister Bugger, it’ll be no better under Pym’s lot.” Richard recognised the name: he was one of Parliament’s leaders.

“And what about the bleddy pirates?” It went quiet: there was agreement on that. Pirates, thought William, what the hell are they on about now? The man continued, “He’s done bugger all about it but he can always find money for one of the Queen’s Balls.”

One old chap began to snigger, “I’ve heard that,” he said. “They do say she’s got more balls than him.” Most laughed and he took another slurp of ale, happy with his joke.

Richard shrugged his shoulders. “Seems to be truth on both sides.”

“Praps, but watch your back, there’ll be fighting soon.” William noticed two women looking their way. On his own he may have been interested but not with his son there. “Come on,” he said, “we’ll wait by the bridge, John will be back soon.”

William looked down at the river, lost in thoughts of Ann as he watched the water sweep under the bridge. Away from the noise of the tavern, Richard saw his chance to discuss something with his father. “You must know that John is unhappy on the farm,” he said, “he wants to take a trade or work with me in the mine.”

“Is that what he said?”

Richard nodded, “I think he resents you making him work at home.”

“Well, he’ll have to put up with it, someone needs to work the land while we’re away.”

“I just thought it might explain his behaviour.”

William shook his head, “That would certainly take some explaining.”

## Chapter 7

Joan watched as they strolled up the hill. They walked through the door and William slumped on the bench.

“Well, did you join up?”

“No, we’ve gotta wait. Sir Richard Buller’s raised an army and we’re going to chase him out of Cornwall.”

Joan sat down and picked up her sewing, “So how long will you be away?”

“Now how the hell would I know that? You want me to fight and I’m going to, but for how long I don’t know.”

Joan thought for a moment, “What about Richard?”

“We’ll go together, now that the harvest is in there’s nothing to stop us.”

“And I spose you’ll leave John to keep us. I don’t know how we’re going to manage.”

William's reply showed little sympathy. "Well you'll bleddy well have to, there's many a family in the same state."

## Chapter 8

### Royalist Muster

The Michaelmas Sessions of Peace for Cornwall began with the presentation of a Bill of Indictment against those who'd brought troops into Cornwall in a warlike manner. It was clearly aimed at the Royalist Sir Ralph Hopton and he immediately volunteered to stand trial. He attended the Saturday session, on the 1<sup>st</sup> October. He wasn't only acquitted but was thanked for coming to Cornwall's aid.

Sir Alexander Carew and Sir Richard Buller were not so lucky. They were charged with creating an unlawful assembly at Launceston. Ambrose Manaton of Trecarrell, the Member of Parliament for Dunheved, was sent to obtain their surrender. Buller refused and John Grylls, the Sheriff of Cornwall, was ordered to raise a posse to disperse his army. It was to muster at Moilesbarrow Down on the 4<sup>th</sup> October.

Richard went to see the mine captain, to tell him he was leaving to fight for the King. "I wish you well lad, come back when it's over, there'll be plenty of tin left to dig." In contrast, his departure was of no interest to James Treleigh.

William made his preparations. He visited his mother, checked his tin-streaming works and said goodbye to Ann. It was painful and her pleading made him reluctant to leave her bed. With a lock of her hair in his pocket he left her cottage, never risking a backward glance. Leaving his wife was a complete contrast. "So you're off then," she said, almost as though he was going to Churchtown.

"We are," he replied. "It'll give us two days to get there, it should be plenty."

He nodded a goodbye to John and in a voice quiet enough for only his ears he said, "I know about the Puritan priest, for God's sake be careful."

John watched as they made their way down the hill. He envied them: if the war lasted long enough then he would join the fight. He'd seen the concern in his father's eyes and hoped he wouldn't have to face him.

The two men were in good heart, it was an adventure and they had a long walk ahead of them. The by-roads around their hamlet were little more than farm tracks and even the main roads were only earth with a few stones here and there, in most cases unsuitable for carriages. It was overcast and by the time they'd walked about 15 miles the light was fading. They found a barn and bedded down for the night.

"We should be there in good time," said William. "We're more than half way and we've all tomorrow. We'll join Mohun's regiment, that's what I told Lord Nathaniel."

"If I've the chance," replied Richard, "I'd like to join Sir Bevil. I liked the look of him at Truro." William didn't reply but his disappointment was obvious. "Are you not happy about that?"

"You must do what you will, I just thought that if we were together, we could look out for each other but no matter."

William closed his eyes and tried to sleep: he'd hoped they would fight together. He thought of happier times. Of when he was young, playing with his children, fishing for trout: he wasn't above a bit of poaching.

He also enjoyed a drink with friends and always looked forward to a visit to the alehouse. The 'devil's chapel' as his wife called it. He would miss his daughters. When they were young, he'd sent them to sleep by telling tales of piskies and fairies. They would look at him in wonder and before he'd finished one story they'd nodded off. Most of all he would miss Ann.

## Chapter 9

### Cornwall For The King

William and Richard made their way down the main street: it was crowded. "All heading for the muster," said William. Richard paused to watch a juggler, he'd always been fascinated by them and this one was good. Ahead of them was the church. "What'll it be Son, church or tavern?"

Richard had already decided. "There'll be time enough for prayer later, right now I need an ale."

The tavern was crowded and they pushed their way to the bar. Once they'd been served, they moved nearer the door. "A bit more air," said William, "and easier to get out if there's trouble."

Richard made a face. "I think there may be – this ale's weaker than piss."

William nodded, "Worse than home." He paused and then continued, "I've been meaning to ask if you sorted out your differences with John."

"Well we're still friends if that's what you mean." He knew that wasn't what his father meant. "Our differences are few. I know what you want to hear but I can't pretend. I aren't a King's man and never will be. There are many like me, they'll fight for the monarchy rather than the man. Charles doesn't care about the likes of us: keeping his family in power is all that matters to him."

William shook his head. "You've no love for our sovereign? I don't understand your generation. Charles is our King, appointed by God."

Richard shook his head, "You surely don't believe that rubbish."

"I do. With all my heart I believe it. I'm just disappointed that neither of my sons do."

Richard looked perplexed. "If it really was God's hand that put him there then I don't think he did a very good job. Anyway, isn't it enough that I'm here to take up arms for him, must I also love him? I support him because that's best for Cornwall. Even Sir Bevil Grenville wants a Cornish army and I know of many who'd go even further."

"Keep your voice down, it carries too well. Mark my words, Parliament will be no friend to us. They'll take more than the King and we'd be worse off than we are now. Cornwall's a Royal Dukedom: our loyalty must be to King Charles. We've no right to question him."

"There are many who question the old order, they're no longer happy to touch their cap and follow their master. We're free men, not slaves. They see this as a time for change."

William was irritated: he could almost believe he was talking to John. He shook his head, "I can only see it one way, disloyalty to the King is the same as disloyalty to God. It's not Cornwall against England this time, that fight has gone for ever."

Richard shook his head. "You're wrong. That fight will never go away but if we stay here all night we won't agree. Perhaps I'm more like John than I realised, just be grateful I'm here to fight with you." The two men left the tavern and headed for a place to sleep. Tomorrow they would travel the few miles to the muster.

John Grylls, the Sheriff of Cornwall, had summoned the posse comitatus to the Royalist cause and the response was overwhelming, thousands gathered on Moilesbarrow Down. Sir Ralph Hopton was delighted with the response but what a rabble they were, mostly farmers, miners or labourers, all untrained and carrying whatever they could find for weapons. William and Richard had each brought a long knife and a club fashioned from the limb of an oak tree.

John Grylls and Hopton tried to sort the men into some sort of order but the constant banter made it difficult. Eventually, Hopton shrugged his shoulders and gave the order to march away. Turning them into a fighting force would have to wait until they reached Launceston.

The ground was firm and the dry twigs snapped under their feet as the long body of men headed for a confrontation with the Cornish Parliamentary Army. This was not the leisurely stroll that William and Richard had made to Bodmin, it was a march and before long, the backs of their legs ached. Richard was young and made light of it but William's joints were stiffer, he wondered how he would fare if he had to march far.

"Alright Granddad?"

William looked down at the man marching beside him. He was short and scruffy with an impish smile. Marching side by side they made a strange pair. "Who the hell are you calling granddad, you squat assed runt?" The man chuckled. It was a reaction William would come to know well before the war was over.

The landscape was unfamiliar, barren and brooding, quite unlike the lush grasslands of home. There were miles of open space with pockets of forests and furze. In the distance, William could see the mist rolling towards them. He'd heard of this place called Launceston but being so far away hadn't taken much interest in it. He'd never travelled more than ten miles from his own hamlet and here he was, marching towards this important town, the ancient capital and gateway to Cornwall with a castle built by Robert, Count of Mortain, half-brother to William the Conqueror.

The town was gripped by fear and rumour: word was that Hopton was coming with an army of 30,000. "And," said one old man, "he's going to hang all they what won't rise for the King." It was a ridiculous number but the townspeople feared their homes would be destroyed and they would be killed. They pleaded with Buller to leave before Hopton arrived. Buller didn't believe the numbers but he knew that his little army of just 1,000 would be heavily outnumbered. He agreed to withdraw and marched away to the east. He crossed the border and then headed south – for Plymouth. Launceston had been handed to the Royalists and as they entered the town there was no resistance.

William thought the place much like Truro except for the buildings that seemed to cling to the steep hillside. They looked likely to start rolling into the valley at any moment. "How about that then, our first victory and not a shot fired. It'll soon be over." William was euphoric, delighted at their success. The war had hardly started and both sides had already occupied Launceston.

Sir Ralph Hopton wanted to give chase but his makeshift army had few armaments and he feared that the Devonshire Parliamentarians could be massed across the border. Apart from that, the Sheriff's authority was limited to Cornwall and it was unlikely that the posse would follow him into Devon. He set up camp and sent a detachment south to take Saltash. As they approached the town the Parliamentarians retreated across the Tamar. The whole of Cornwall was now in Royalist hands.

William Ennor had been thrust into a situation far removed from his quiet rural way of life. He expected violence and cruelty but the behaviour of his own side towards their fellow countrymen sickened him. "I can't understand them, they should be ashamed to call themselves Cornish. Arrogance it is, bleddy arrogance."

Despite Sir Ralph Hopton's orders, his army turned to plunder and even set fire to houses. Ambrose Manaton, the man who'd worked so hard to prevent fighting in Cornwall, had to watch his house go up in flames. The lack of pay was blamed but Hopton could do nothing about that: he locked up the ringleaders and threatened to hang them if it continued.

"Now, that's what I call a leader," said William. From that day Hopton could do little wrong as far as he was concerned.

The town had many Parliamentary sympathisers and once order was restored, Hopton began to hunt down those who'd helped Buller. The Royalists in the town had little compunction about pointing them out. Launceston was now held for the King and they were intent on keeping it that way.

The challenge facing Hopton was immense. He had to create an army capable of defending Cornwall and taking the fight to the enemy. As it stood, the large and untrained rabble now under his command could do neither. He formed five volunteer regiments under their gentlemen commanders: Sir Bevil Grenville, Colonel Nicholas Slanning, Colonel John Trevanion, Sir William Godolphin and Warwick Lord Mohun. Mohun himself had yet to arrive. These regiments became known as the Cornish Army. Slanning was involved in the tin trade and his regiment consisted mainly of miners whereas Grenville had enlisted men from among his tenants and servants. William took his place in Lord Mohun's regiment while Richard set out to find one of Sir Bevil Grenville's officers.

For the Ennors, military life so far had been about marching and controlling the people of Launceston: sterner tests lay ahead. William tried to join the artillery but he was turned down. His protest was ignored and he slouched away.

"It don't make sense," he moaned. "They should've put me on the heavy guns. I'd be better there."

Instead he was given a musket, a muzzle-loading matchlock. The training was basic but there was plenty of time to practise. He watched the others, mostly younger than him. They poured the black powder down the barrel and picked up a shot. His large hands shook as he tried to copy them. He could feel the officer's eyes on him. Everyone else was making good progress, or so it seemed. He dropped in the lead shot, pushed in the wadding and rammed it tight. The musket was now loaded but there was more to be done before it would fire. He pulled back the cover of the flash pan, filled it with powder from his flask and closed it again. By now some of the others had fired their weapons and an impatient voice boomed out, "Blow it away: blow the powder away." William nodded and blew away the excess powder. The match hung from his belt, a length of cord soaked in saltpetre, it was smouldering. He placed it in position so that it would ignite the powder in the pan when the trigger was pulled. At last he was ready and he blasted off his first shot. He was unprepared for the kick.

The muskets were unreliable, sometimes the match went out or a spark would ignite the powder prematurely, injuring the user. In wet weather it was difficult to keep the match alight and at night its glow could reveal your position making you an easy target. The more proficient managed to load and fire every twenty or thirty seconds. William was not a star pupil and the constant teasing riled him. After all, he could now see that there were others with the same problem. For close fighting the musket was used as a club. William grasped the barrel and swung it violently. No one laughed now: he would be a formidable opponent for any Parliamentarian.

Richard was to be a pikeman. The pike was a stout ash pole with a steel tip. Most men had shortened their weapon to about fifteen feet, to make it more manageable. The instructions were simple to understand. "You just skewer your enemy before he runs you through. It's your job to protect the musketeers from charging cavalry or to tussle with enemy pikeman in a push of pike." Richard lifted it to his shoulder: it felt comfortable.

## Chapter 10

### Death of A Priest

John was now the head of the family but his mother's domineering nature, and that of the old woman, suggested otherwise. He had to provide for the family: his mother and sisters helped but it was mostly down to him.

He made no secret that he hated farm work and with his father at the war he'd more opportunity to slink away. He was also more outspoken and defiant. His political views caused endless rows and his mother would round on him. "I'll not have such traitorous talk here: it'll lead you to the gallows."

He often talked about the war with his sisters, even showing his pleasure at the occasional Parliamentary success. There was mixed news from across the country but within Cornwall, the Royalists were firmly in control. Outside the house he had to be careful. It could earn him a beating or worse and with no political friends in the hamlet, he decided to resume his visits. He now knew that his father was aware of the Puritan priest.

The cleric had come to the area from London where he'd been a staunch critic of Archbishop Laud. He'd welcomed John's visits. "It doesn't do to fall out with Laud. No doubt you've wondered about my appearance."

John had been embarrassed, especially as his eyes must have left the priest in no doubt that he'd noticed. "You mean your ears," he said, "I...I thought maybe you'd suffered an illness."

"An illness? No Boy, not an illness. The good Archbishop arranged for me to have them cropped. I had to leave London or he'd have finished the job. I was persuaded to come to Cornwall to rebuild my life and to work for Parliament."

John had guessed that the role was more active than the priest implied. "To do what?" he'd asked but the priest had become evasive. Later, when he knew him better, he'd told him of the network. "It's people like myself, supporters of Parliament. I only know two, the one below me and the one above." John appreciated the trust but he'd already guessed that much. He wanted to know what part he would play.

The priest had smiled, "You've already started, first the teaching and then as a member ready to play your part when the time is right." John had learned a lot from the priest, the reasons for the war and about the King. He'd even learned to read and write simple English. It was essential, he'd been told. When John's visits had ended abruptly the priest had made enquiries. He was relieved to discover that John's absence was not because of a change of heart.

John's pace slackened as he climbed Church Hill. It was steep and he had to pick his way over the stones filling the ruts made by the carts. Churchtown was not busy. There were a few people looking at the stalls or gossiping and three women stood by the church, as if waiting for someone. One was a fine lady: clearly



from an important family. The others were probably her maids. As John passed by, he heard someone mention her name. Aha, he thought, so that's Mrs Treleigh.

Rebecca Treleigh was the wife of James Treleigh, a local landowner and tin mine adventurer, Richard's employer. John's father had talked of them as staunch Royalists, major contributors to the cause. To John they were the enemy.

Walking towards them was a priest. It wasn't John's cleric: it was the local vicar, Michael Stuckey. John put his hand to his face: he could do without a lecture from him. He need not have worried: Stuckey had seen Rebecca Treleigh and was soon deep in conversation. They'd no interest in a scruffy farm boy. He sneaked passed the church and turned right into the alleyway just beyond. A few paces up the rough track and he was facing the cleric's door. He knocked. There was no response and he knocked again. He knew the priest seldom ventured out and was uncertain what to do. He couldn't risk being seen there. He lifted the latch and stepped into the cottage.

"Father Marcus, are you there?" Silence. He stood there, wondering what to do. He was about to leave when he heard footsteps, they were outside but coming nearer. Perhaps it was the priest. He felt a surge of guilt: he wished he'd waited outside. The sound faded. Whoever it was, had no business there.

A note, he thought, I'll leave a note. He couldn't write well but a few scribbled words would show he'd been there. He pushed open the door to the passageway and walked the few steps to the study, the room where they talked. As he entered, he smiled in relief. Father Marcus was asleep in his chair. He moved forward and placed a hand on the cleric's shoulder. He didn't stir, nor would he. The desk was bright red: saturated in blood. John recoiled at the sight: the look of horror on the priest's face, the gaping cut to his throat. He felt sick. He'd often watched his father slaughter pig. It was just like that but this was a man: a priest.

He stared at the face. It was contorted: eyes wide open. He turned to run but stopped, he'd one last duty to perform. The priest had said, "If anything happens to me, take care of the book, destroy it if you must." The book was important. It had something to do with the network but that was all John knew. Sightless eyes watched him as he reached for the box where it was kept. The lid fell on the desk with a clatter and he grabbed the book. A prayer, he thought. The priest had helped so many on their way, it was the least he could do for him. He placed a hand on his shoulder and mouthed a final farewell. Even as he did, he knew he'd lingered too long. More footsteps: this time from within the house. He froze. If he was caught, he could be accused of working with the priest or even of his murder. He darted for the door but it was too late. Two men blocked his escape.

With a chuckle one said, "Splendid, someone to hang for the poor cleric."

To explain would be pointless: the men were his killers. There was no way passed: he was trapped. He moved back until he was up against the desk.

"What's the book? I fancy we may have a use for that."

In desperation John turned. He pushed the priest from his chair and leapt onto the desk. The window was open and in a moment he was through it and back in the alleyway. It seemed like only a second before they were after him, cursing, shouting, "Stop, murderer, stop that boy."

As he entered Churchtown all eyes turned his way. All they could see was a boy running, a boy with a torn and blood-splattered shirt. Suddenly, they were all shouting, Mrs Treleigh, the vicar, everyone. He ran passed the entrance to the church, it was downhill but he could've sprinted up a mountain if he had to, he'd never been so terrified in his life. He reached the bottom of the hill and stood panting. There was

nowhere to hide and he began to run again, up the road towards his hamlet. Within a minute he'd left the houses behind. There was no sound of his pursuers. His lungs were bursting but he dared not pause for breath. The next sound would be horses: if he were caught then he would hang.

John reached the brow of the hill and sprinted along the flat. The land to his left was covered with trees, furze and bracken: it sloped steeply down to the little river in the valley. It was where he helped his father with the tin streaming: he knew it well. Then he heard it: the sound of approaching horses, their hooves pounding a steady rhythmic beat on the earth track. He darted into the undergrowth. It was dense and he had to fight his way through. There was good cover but the bushes tore at his clothes and flesh. The hoof beats were closer now and he forced himself on to put as much distance between himself and the track as possible. A few more yards and he stopped. He lay still. Almost immediately he was aware of an irritation and he cursed his luck as an army of ants made their way over his body.

The hoof beats slowed and then ceased. The heavy breathing of the horses made him wish he could have made it further from the lane. He lay there, not daring to move: his pursuers just 30 yards away. He clutched the book. Thank God he'd managed to hold onto it.

By now the ants were everywhere, crawling, biting. They were in his hair, on his face: his whole body was under attack. He shuffled to one side, away from the entrance to their nest but it made no difference. He chanced a look through the furze bush that had become his hiding place and could see two men on horseback. One was about fifty, slight of build and well dressed. He was on a large, white horse. John had seen it before. The other man was heavily built and perhaps thirty.

The older man shouted, "He could be anywhere, we've lost him." John felt a surge of relief.

By now the irritation was intense, he was in agony and all he wanted was to strip off and get rid of the ants. But the other man wasn't ready to give up. "Wait," he said, "if he's still running then we'll soon see him heading up the other side of the hill." They moved forward a few paces and waited until it became clear that he'd turned off the track.

The older man nodded to the right. "He's either up there with the sheep or down in that lot." He pointed towards the dense undergrowth. "I'm not taking my horse in there."

"There is a way," said his colleague, "we could fire it."

John froze. He'd seen the valley on fire: it spread almost as quickly as a man could move. If they set fire to it then he would either run or roast. Either way he stood little chance but at the first sign of a flame he would scamper away.

The older man was agitated. "That's easy for you, I've got a lot of equipment down there: we might get the boy but it'll cost me dear."

"It's your decision, Mr Treleigh. Anyway, we don't need to take him back: plenty of people saw him run and they'll say he did it."

"You're right, we'll spread the word that he escaped and I'll offer a reward. I won't forget his face in a hurry."

John listened to the hoof beats as they left. He lay there as long as he could but the agony of the miniature army was too much and he sprang to his feet and ripped off his clothes. He tore down to the bottom of the valley, to the fast-running water of the stream. It was freezing cold but the relief was heaven. He shook the

ants off his clothes and washed the priest's blood from his shirt. His strong hands wrung out as much water as possible and he spread it on the furze to dry.

He lay there thinking about what had happened. So the man on the white horse was a Treleigh. It had to be James Treleigh. He was wealthy and clearly not after money in which case the murder was to do with the cleric's support for Parliament. He had to find the identity of the leader of the spy ring, if nothing else he had to convince him he wasn't the killer. He knew the book was important, maybe it held a clue.

John's shirt was almost dry. He was still shaking as he left the valley. He would lie low for a while.

## Chapter 11

"Mother, tis nothing to do with you, nor the old bag, I'm old enough to look after myself." John had been away for some hours: he'd been missed and he knew the questions from his mother and grandmother wouldn't cease until he told them where he'd been.

"You're fifteen years old and still under my roof, I'll not have you bringing shame on this family. Your father and brother are away fighting and for all I know you're scheming against them."

There was no stopping her so he lied, "If you must know I was with a girl."

It took his mother by surprise but she was determined to have the last word. "Well, alright but who is she? I don't want you playing around with that Jennings girl again."

"That Jennings girl, I'm fed up with you moaning about that Jennings girl." He stormed out of the cottage and slammed the door: he'd had enough of being told what to do. After all, it was because of him there was food on the table.

Jenefer Jennings lived in the next hamlet. She was a nice enough girl, undeserving of the reputation she'd earned because of her father. Josiah Jennings was a drunkard, an out and out womaniser with unwanted children all over the district. His success in that area was a mystery and William had often wondered if Joan's hatred of him was because he'd never shown any interest in her.

As John worked, he watched the lanes for the men who'd chased him. He'd hidden the book in the valley, near where they streamed for tin. He couldn't risk bringing it home. After a few days he felt better and other matters occupied his mind, including the Jennings girl. The cottage faced away from the lane and as he walked out of the door and around the end of the building, he heard the dull thud of hooves coming up the hill. His first instinct was to hide but he quickly realised that the laborious plod was a friendlier sound. A team of horses were struggling up by the manor.

"You looking for me?" He asked.

The girl leading them laughed. "Hah, don't flatter yourself, I've been to collect the grist from the mill and I'm on my way home."

"Since when was this the quickest way?"

"I fancied a change of scenery," and then, in a quiet voice she said, "Will I see you tonight?"

“Maybe,” he said. John was aware of the eyes trained on his back. His mother watched as he talked to the girl, the girl she’d warned him against, the Jennings girl.

“Don’t you have to get that stuff home to your father?” Joan’s voice was sharp. “John, there’s work to be done.”

He shook his head and said, “You’d better go.” He winked and in a quiet voice added, “I’ll meet you by the river, providing you promise to make it worth my while.”

She smiled and whispered, “You’d better say if you’ve anything to complain about, there’s plenty who’d be happy to take your place.” She shook the reins and the nags moved off up the track, turned right and disappeared into the lane towards her home.

“I’ve told you before, that girl’s no good, flaunting herself like that. I don’t want you seeing her again.”

“No Mother, whatever you say.” There was a chuckle in his voice, he’d no intention of taking any notice and his mother was well aware of it.

## Chapter 12

William and Richard were now a part of the Cornish Army, holding a defensive line along the Tamar, a frontier with many crossings to guard. There were those on both sides of the river who considered Devon to be a border county and the war to be as much between Cornwall and England as it was between King and Parliament. Some even sought revenge for the defeats in the rebellions of the past.

Cornwall had been reluctant to show its hand at first, before it received the nudge from a Somerset man, but now it was firmly Royalist and those who were against the King had either crossed into Devon or learned to keep their mouths shut. The picture in Devon was less clear, its towns and villages held allegiance for one side or the other.

Hopton was anxious to make gains in Devon but Parliament had its own ambitions with Cornwall high on its list of targets. For it to achieve success the Parliamentary navy would have to be more effective than it had been so far. Royalist ships frustrated it and the coastal defences at Pendennis, St Mawes and St Michael’s Mount had been improved. Truro was some way from the Devon border and a long way up the river, a relatively safe place for the Royalist Mint. It was set up in St Nicholas Street and soon began production.

The King was delighted at the way Cornwall had rallied to his cause and the loyalty of Sir Ralph Hopton didn’t go unnoticed. The Western Army was set up with the Marquis of Hertford at its head. Lord Mohun, Sir Ralph Hopton, Sir John Berkeley and William Ashburnham were under him and any two of them were to take command in his absence. Their authority extended across the six western counties and the cities of Bristol and Exeter.

## Chapter 13

It was about eight o’clock in the evening when John reached the end of Jenefer’s lane: as ever she’d been careful to avoid her father. He didn’t let her mix with any of the local lads and certainly not with John. “I don’t want you seeing no bleddy rebel,” he’d told her, “I know what he gets up to.” The man ruled her life

and she lived in fear of his heavy hand. She crept out of the door and across the untidy garden. Once out of sight she made her way down through the woods, clambered through a gap in the hedge and across the meadow separating the lane from the little river. She loved to watch the water and imagined it meandering the few miles to the Celtic Sea.

“So, your mother let you out then,” she said.

John was full of bravado. “Huh, I do as I want.”

“It looked like it the way she was giving you orders.”

“I’m here aren’t I? Stop making fun of me.”

“Father says you’ll be off fighting soon. He says you’re a rebel and will end up on the end of a rope.”

“Is that what he says? Well you don’t want to take no notice of him, he hates my guts.”

“What does he mean about you being a rebel? Are you for Parliament?”

“Could be, make a difference does it?”

“Not to me, I don’t understand none of it and I don’t spose it’ll make no difference who wins.”

John kissed her but it was not as passionate as usual and she sensed that he’d something on his mind. He had...a recurring thought that if he left for the war then within a few days she would be sharing the riverbank with someone else. Perhaps she already was. He’d made up his mind to ask her but before he’d a chance she said, “John, are you seeing anyone else?”

He couldn’t mask his surprise and he responded more abruptly than he intended. “Now why the hell do you ask that? Are you, that’s more to the point?”

His defensive reply increased her concern but she answered his question. “No I’m not and that’s the truth. You sound as though you think I am.”

John paused, aware of what his mother kept telling him. “It’s just...”

“It’s just what people are saying, I know. Why do they say these things about me? And why do you believe them?”

They strolled arm in arm along the riverbank, through the bushes and into the little copse. She took one last look to make sure her father hadn’t followed and then they kissed, this time it was passionate. It was quiet down by the little river, it was where she came to be alone with her thoughts or to be with John. It seemed the natural place for them to make love. She was a sensitive girl, quite undeserving of the stories about her. In the spring, the sides of the little valley would be alive with daffodils and shortly afterwards the bluebells would appear. It was still light and John watched as Jenefer pulled her smock over her head. She lay there, naked.

“Come on,” she said, “I’m getting cold.”

He lay beside her and their lips touched. His hands wandered to her breasts and her breathing quickened. Her young body was soft to his touch and he pulled her to him.

“I do love you Jen, you know that don’t you.”

“I know but I still like to be told.”

“And shown?” he asked.

“And shown,” she replied.

## **Chapter 14**

“Come on you girls, it’s time you were in bed. I don’t know where John has got to.” Both girls giggled, they were in their early teens and well aware of what their brother got up to.

Despite Joan’s insistence that talk of the war was for the men, she worried about it and often found herself thinking about Richard: even William. “Does John ever talk to you about the war?” she asked, “Because if he does then you’d better tell me, otherwise he could end up in trouble.”

The frivolity stopped: they looked at the floor, reluctant to talk about something they didn’t understand, unwilling to let down their brother. “He never tells us anything,” Catherine said, “he just says girls wouldn’t understand.” They kissed their mother goodnight and climbed the wooden ladder to the upper floor. It had been a busy day and both were soon asleep.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Edgehill – The First Battle**



English Locations Mentioned

Charles Stuart prepared for the battle that would surely settle the matter. If he lost then he would return to the throne with his wings clipped. Defeat for the men of Parliament would have more dramatic consequences: charges of treason had already been prepared.

Cornwall's support for the King angered Parliament. Its army had been chased across the border and the London news-sheets talked of the great misery of the Cornish under the tyranny of the Cavaliers.

William heard of a great battle up country, he'd been told where it took place but the name meant nothing to him. Now he waited to hear which side had won. "Whatever happens," he told Richard, "it'll soon be over and we can go home."

It had been an hour since the messenger had arrived. He'd gone immediately to report to the officers, to tell them the outcome of the Battle at Edgehill.

"How bloody long does it take?" said William. There was no response from the others. Few understood the implications: many didn't care about the outcome as long as they could go home.

"There he is." One of the men had spotted the messenger at the food tent. He'd left the officers and was chomping his first meal since he'd left Warwickshire. William and the others ambled over to join him. They wanted the news now, not when the officers decided to tell them.

The man's words were interspersed with mouthfuls of bread and a generous helping of ale. To make matters worse, his gluttony had given him hiccups. He swigged more ale to calm his insides.

"It was the King against Devereux," he spluttered.

“Who’s Devro?” asked one of the men.

“Sir Robert Devereux, the 3rd Earl of Essex,” he replied with obvious disdain. “He’s head of the Parliamentary Army. He was trying to stop the King from marching on London.”

“On London,” came the response, “why London?”

The question was ignored and the man continued, “First of all our artillery opened up, they gave them hell. Then, when we’d softened them up, Prince Rupert charged. Essex had no answer to it, they rode straight through them.” He coughed out a half-eaten mouthful of soggy bread: the ale was working. “Trouble was, our cavalry kept on charging till they reached the baggage wagons. Then they stopped to plunder.” He shook his head, “It gave them time to recover and when their infantry charged, they were fearsome, they forced us right back. See, we’d no cavalry there to help us. It was a hell of a battle and it didn’t stop till the light began to dim. By then we were exhausted.”

“So who won?” said William.

Irritated by the interruption, the messenger glanced at William. “I’m coming to that,” he said, “if you’ll only give me a chance.” He paused to recover his thoughts. “Next morning we formed up again but neither side seemed to want to fight. The King asked Essex to surrender but he wouldn’t. Mind you, he didn’t fight either, he just sat there.” Another mouthful of bread and a slurp of ale and he was off again, now quite enjoying the attention he was receiving. “The next day Essex withdrew, back to Warwick or so we were told. And the King headed for Oxford.”

“So neither side won,” concluded William, “and London’s safe.”

“Maybe,” said the messenger. “After I left I heard that Essex had returned to London and the King chased after him. There was a bit of a fight but the King backed off and now he’s at Oxford again.”

“And so the war will go on,” sighed William.

“Aye, the war will go on.”

William Ennor’s hope for a quick outcome was dashed and both sides prepared for a long war.

In Cornwall there were mixed reports of the battle. Depending on the source it was either a glorious victory for the King or a resounding win for Parliament. Whichever was true, the outcome was the same, the war would continue.

## Chapter 16

Sir Ralph Hopton’s first priority was to keep Cornwall secure for the King. He told his regimental leaders that the best way to do this was to take the fight to the enemy, to remove the threat before it reached the border. With his volunteer regiments in place he could do this. He positioned patrols along the line of the Tamar and broke camp with the regiments of Sir Bevil Grenville, Jonathan Trelawny and John Trevanion.

William Ennor was left on garrison duty but Richard was with Grenville’s regiment. He marched next to a young lad, Walter Smiley, the son of a Grenville tenant. They were about the same age and struck up a friendship. In stature Richard towered over him. He was a useful comrade for the shorter man.



“So where are you from?”

“Down Truro way,” said Richard, “a small hamlet, just in from the coast.”

“I’ve heard of Truro, never been there though. That’s some way, couldn’t you find anyone down there to fight?”

Hopton led them across the Tamar and into Devon. It was a long march to Exeter. He assembled his force in front of the walls and summoned Mayor Christopher Clark to surrender.

The refusal was quick. “No surprise there,” said Richard, “they won’t give up without a fight.”

That night, Hopton’s men attacked the west wall. There was no breakthrough and in the morning the artillery took over. The walls stood firm but there were casualties and the people inside the walls were in panic. Children screamed and animals scampered around, desperately scratching at doors as they tried to find a dark corner. The big guns roared but despite the ferocity, the defenders were defiant and as soon as the firing died down, they were back on the ramparts, picking off the Cornish soldiers. Richard was with the pikemen, some way back. He looked across at Walter and shook his head. “Tis bleddy madness,” he shouted.

The people of Exeter withstood everything that Hopton threw at them and there was a grudging acceptance that the Cornish regiments lacked the necessary equipment for a breakthrough. They withdrew to a safe distance and set up a siege. Perhaps the shortage of food would make Mayor Clark reconsider.

Inside the walls, there was no thought of giving in, quite the opposite. They remained resolute. Darkness brought a break in the fighting and as the weary Cornish musketeers settled for a night’s rest, the fires burned low. The silence was occasionally broken by a dog bark but that was all.

The creak of the main gate being opened didn’t carry to the ears of the Royalist guards. With hardly a sound, Mayor Clark led his party through the portal and out into the surrounding countryside – towards the enemy. They dropped onto their bellies and crawled as close as they could. Clark couldn’t see but he guessed that his men were ready and he fired the signal shot. The shouts and musket fire from the Parliamentarians took the Royalist guards completely by surprise and they desperately tried to hold them off until the other soldiers could join in. It was mayhem.

Clark had the advantage of surprise and he made the most of it as he cut down man after man who’d dared to attack his Exeter. Hopton’s men rallied and took up the fight. It was hand-to-hand stuff with both sides trying to gain the advantage and then, at Clark’s signal, his men broke off and scampered back inside the walls. Both Richard and Walter survived the action and in the morning they were in the party tasked with counting and burying the dead.

The Cornish attack had failed and Sir Ralph Hopton reluctantly took his army back to Tavistock. From there he crossed into Cornwall. Despite his obvious disappointment, the Cornish had fought well and the experience was stored as he planned his next campaign.

## Chapter 17

The mood in Plymouth was subdued, more so than usual. Sir Richard Buller, the man who’d built the Cornish Parliamentary Army was dead. His family asked the Royalist leaders for safe passage to take his body to his home in Saltash for burial. Hopton immediately agreed. Despite their differences, Buller was

respected and there were few who disagreed with the decision. The war was still being fought with a degree of decency.

Despite the navy having declared for Parliament, Royalist ships were active in Cornish waters. They brought weapons and powder from the continent and regularly slipped through the blockades to reach Falmouth Haven, St Ives and Penzance. Queen Henrietta Maria had bought munitions with the money raised by the sale of Royal regalia and Cornish tin. Sir Nicholas Slanning's fleet of privateers had also been busy seizing goods from merchantmen.

Apart from the weapons of war, the Queen had been busy enlisting foreign mercenaries. She'd managed to raise a French regiment which she called the Queen's Regiment of Horse. Like most of the foreign soldiers they were not popular and often became involved in skirmishes with their own side. Some weeks before, two other foreigners had joined the Royalist cause – the brothers Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice, the King's nephews. Their reasons were more to do with family loyalty than money.

"Now that's just what I said would happen," said William to anyone who'd listen, "they're flocking in to help the King."

The man beside him was thoughtful. "And that's alright is it? I mean, it's a bit sad when he's gotta rely on bleddy foreigners to fight his own people."

"Trust you to look at it that way," said William. "It's the respect they've got for him and his cause?"

"Respect!" It was the little man who'd marched beside him to Launceston. "I heard they're doing it for the half-crown and our handsome women. Hell, I was born here and I don't even get the women."

## Chapter 18

John Ennor made his way down the hill to the valley: he'd waited a few weeks and now he was on his way to retrieve the book. He hoped that he would understand the contents. He brushed away the leaves and the thin layer of earth: the stone that covered it was still in place. He was nervous: eyes seem to peer at him from every bush.

He opened the cover and on the first page was a badly drawn diagram: perhaps the area controlled by the priest, he thought. He turned the page but it was full of scribbled notes and initials. Some sort of code maybe but none of it made sense to him. He had no idea what it all meant but he was certain of its importance.

The priest had told him that many people had been tasked with recording events as they saw them, evidence from around the country. Of course, there were people in London scribing away but it was important to record how things were viewed in every area. The names and activities of Royalist sympathisers would be of great use when the war had been won. John was intrigued and wanted to examine it further but he'd already been there too long: the rest would have to wait.

## Chapter 19

Colonel Walter Slingsby of Mohun's regiment occupied Mount Edgecumbe House and the village of Millbrook. With the west bank of the Tamar in Royalist hands, Plymouth was in constant fear of attack. No

one was more aware of this than Cornishman Sir Alexander Carew, Parliamentary Governor of St Nicholas Island. In early December he led a raid across the river. He attacked Millbrook and forced Slingsby to retreat to Crafhole. The line had been breached.

Slingsby had been taken by surprise and as soon as he could get a message to Sir Ralph Hopton, plans were put in place to recover the area. They had to be quick or Carew could fortify it and it would be a lot more difficult to retake.

William was in the party that left Bodmin to join with Slingsby's force and the Sheriff's posse. "Didn't you have any lookouts?" he asked. The question was directed towards one of Slingsby's musketeers.

"Yeah, I don't know what the hell happened: they were playing cards, I reckon."

William showed his disgust. "Well, good job you got us to call on. With a bit of luck we'll capture Carew."

They approached Millbrook, intent on pushing the enemy into the river. Hopton led the attack. The Parliamentarians were outnumbered. They fought well but before long they were driven back across the river. Alexander Carew escaped with them.

The rebuff didn't dent Carew's determination. After all, they were camped near his home. His next attack was at night. A flotilla of 36 small boats paddled quietly across the river. No one spoke. The tide helped their progress. As they neared the shore, they jumped into the shallow water and crept up the beach but it was their turn to be taken by surprise. Major Slingsby, still smarting from the previous attack, was determined not to be caught out again. His men charged across the sand towards them and Carew's men scrambled back into their boats and feverishly paddled for the opposite shore.

## Chapter 20

Hopton was back in Bodmin when a messenger arrived. He'd brought an invitation from the High Sheriff of Devon inviting him to bring his army across the river to join with a group of Royalist Devonshire gentlemen at Tavistock. Hopton was delighted and prepared to move out. He gave orders that the garrisons at Mount Edgecumbe, Millbrook and Saltash should be strengthened and the guard doubled on all the fords and crossing points on the river.

"Something's happening," said William's scruffy little companion. "I don't know what it is but I reckon we're off somewhere."

William looked down at the little man who he now seemed to have acquired. "Hopton told you I suppose," he teased.

"No, I don't need telling. I've got a nose for it. Military training I spose."

Military training my ass, thought William.

They watched as Hopton marched away with his army. He headed north, to Launceston, where he planned to cross the border.

William and his friend had been left with the garrison at Saltash. "Suits me," said the little man, "we're out of it here. All we gotta do is make sure they don't come over this river again."

As Hopton reached Launceston there was bad news. The Parliamentarians had heard about the plan. They now occupied Tavistock and the High Sheriff had abandoned the action. Despite the setback, Hopton was not about to give up. He moved out of Launceston, crossed the Tamar and into Devon. As he headed for Tavistock, he prepared for battle but there was to be no fight, the enemy had decided against it. They knew that Hopton had a formidable army and they'd left the town.

The Devon Royalists were strongest in the South Hams but while Plymouth was held for Parliament, they could do little to help the King. The town was a problem and Hopton decided that to make any headway he'd have to take it. He headed south and sent word that the remaining units at Saltash were to cross the river to join him. As before, the trained bands refused and it was the volunteer units that headed for the riverbank and the waiting flotilla of boats.

"So much for us staying in Cornwall."

"Who said that?" asked one of the officers.

"The loud-mouthed dwarf," replied William, making sure the little man could hear him.

The reply of bollocks confirmed that he had.

There was no chance to argue. They were told to take their turn in the boats and to wait on the other shore.

William looked across the river. "I hate the bleddy water," he said, not talking to anyone in particular but it was a smooth crossing. Even so, he was glad to be back on dry land, even if he was in Devon.

"Alright are you?" The little chap asked, "you're rocking a bit."

William nodded, "tis the water, it always takes me like that. How about you?"

"As right as you, I spose. Anyway, where you from?"

"On the coast, north of Truro. I'm a farmer, William Ennor."

"Pleased to meet you Will, I'm Jabez Retallack from Penryn and no, I aren't alright, I'm shitting myself."

William's reaction to the little man softened, "Don't worry, we'll be alright. Jabez, now what sort of name is that to get my tongue around."

"You never heard of it? They reckon tis royal, probably after one of they there Cornish Kings."

William laughed, "Must have been his middle name." He looked at the lane ahead.

"Well most of my friends call me Jabe so you can do the same."

"Friends? You got friends? Anyway, they do say there's many a Cornishman fighting over here, for Parliament I mean. How the hell could they do that?"

With water on three sides, Plymouth was well defended. On the fourth, facing north, was a fortified wall and William spent the next few hours helping to drag the artillery into position.

"Bleddy cheek," he said, "the buggers didn't want me before. Now I gotta help them out."

The Parliamentary quarters were at Plympton, it was Hopton's first target. He left enough men to blockade Plymouth and headed towards the enemy base. William and his new friend stood next to each other, watching as the defenders made obscene gestures at them.

Colonel Ruthin commanded the Parliamentarian force at Plympton. He and his men had been on their way from Scotland to Europe when bad weather had forced them to take cover. The garrison at Plymouth had invited him to fight for Parliament and he'd accepted. He was a mercenary and their money was as good as any. He relaxed, unaware that he was about to come under attack.

Surprise is a powerful ally and Hopton hit him fast and hard. He broke through the light defences and Ruthin was forced to make a speedy escape. He headed for the safety of Plymouth.

"Well that's stirred 'em up good and proper," said Jabe. "Now there's a few more in Plymouth to shoot at us. We gotta have more men. It's time Hopton got tough with they buggers over at Saltash. We'd no choice so why should they?"

"It's no good," replied William, "they won't cross the river. Anyway, I've heard he's going to recruit some from here."

"What, from Devon? Well I aren't going to fight with they bastards."

William laughed. "Well you may have to. The Sheriff's posted notices calling for a muster at some place called Modbury. He reckons the area's full of Royalist just waiting for someone to lead them."

## Chapter 21

### The Battle of Modbury

A large crowd gathered at Modbury but most saw it as a good day out and had no intention of joining any army, especially one from Cornwall.

"Hopton's hellish," said Jabe. "He reckons they're taking the piss. I reckon we're going back to Cornwall."

"I wouldn't bet on it. He's told everyone he's going to take Plymouth for the King and he isn't the sort to give up."

Hopton's target was Plymouth but fear of an attack from the east forced him to delay. First, he would deal with Dartmouth and then he would turn his attention to Plymouth. Sir Bevil Grenville's regiment was divided, half headed for Modbury and the remainder, including Richard, set out for Totnes. Two troops of horse patrolled the roads to the east of Plymouth.

"Well I hope Ruthin don't decide to have a go at us while that lot are away enjoying themselves," moaned Jabe.

"No chance," said William, "they aren't strong enough to take us on."

William was right but there was an attack, or rather a series of attacks. It came from the civilians. Armed with little more than pitchforks, they crept along the hedgerows and ambushed small groups of Royalists soldiers.

William shrugged, "I spose we'd do the same. They're only protecting their homes."

"Only!" exclaimed Jabe. "They're ungrateful bastards. They invited us here and now they've turned on us." By now, Hopton had begun to understand the deep-rooted resentment between Devon and Cornwall.

Jabe gripped his musket and stared at the walls, watching for any movement. "For all the bleddy good we're doing we may as well push off home."

William chuckled, "I'm sure Sir Ralph won't mind. 'Specially as he's just given you a free ride over the river."

The little man made a face. "Well if there's one thing I don't take kindly to, tis being ignored. I got better things to do with my time than sit around on my ass."

"Busy time of year is it?"

"I'm always busy, not like you bleddy farmers."

Colonel Ruthin had been made to look a fool and his Scottish hackles were up. He'd vowed to win back his headquarters and now he was ready. Under cover of darkness, he slipped out of Plymouth and headed for Modbury: he had 800 horse and dragoons. Taking care to avoid the patrols, they moved to within half a mile of the village. When he was satisfied that everyone was in place he raised his pistol and fired. The riders galloped out of the darkness and into the village, firing their guns and slashing at anything that moved. The Royalists were taken completely by surprise: they'd no chance to recover and were soon in full flight, running back along the roads to Plymouth. Many were overtaken and captured including the High Sheriff of Devon. Hopton and Slanning managed to escape.

The Scot was delighted. He'd saved Dartmouth, regained his quarters and with it, the respect of his men. For a fleeting moment he thought about riding to relieve Plymouth but he knew that surprise had been his greatest ally: he would stand little chance against the full Cornish Army. Instead, he gathered together his troops and prisoners and rode for Dartmouth.

Jabe shook his head. "Now it's Hopton's turn to look a fool. Bleddy disaster if you ask me."

"Well I don't think he will. Ask you I mean."

"Modbury was our only success. Now he's lost that and a lot of men too." Jabe was in full flow again. "I reckon I can hear that lot in Plymouth laughing at us."

William nodded. "Praps Ruthin's a better soldier than we thought. It was a good move and we can't put all the blame on Sir Ralph."

Jabe looked at William. He was certainly a Hopton man. "I tell you now, without more men we aren't never going to get in there. Hopton was of the same mind and just before Christmas, he lifted the siege.

William and Jabe gathered their belongings and the army marched away. "I bet they're relieved," said Jabe.

"Who's that then?" asked William.

"They lot back there, defending the town, I don't reckon we made one bit of difference to them and now we've pushed off without even so much as a Christmas present."

William smiled. "Did you tell Hopton you wanted to go back to Saltash only it seems we're headed the other way?"

"I know that. He said to me, 'Jabe, I know you're right but if you don't mind, we're going to traipse around for a bit.' I said to him, 'That's alright with me Ralphy boy, as long as we're back home in time for my birthday'."

William laughed: his new friend was a real joker.

Hopton was determined to achieve something in Devon. If he couldn't take Plymouth then he would go for the other major prize – Exeter. He and Ashburnham camped at Alphington, about two miles south of their target. They commanded the main force while a detachment moved north and occupied Torrington to prevent an attack from Barnstaple or Bideford. Grenville and Godolphin marched away with a long line of troops. "Must be doing river trips," joked Jabe. They headed for Topsham: its capture would give the Royalists control of the river, the main supply route into the Exeter.

"I know we took a bit of a beating back there," said William, "but I reckon there's nothing in Devon to match us, not so long as they don't take us by surprise again."

Jabe was unconvinced. "In a fight, maybe, but getting inside they there walls is another matter."

Hopton hoped the local Royalists would join him but as at Modbury, he was disappointed. He was also low on supplies. There was no chance of a long siege and he immediately called on Mayor Clark to surrender. There was no reply.

"Fat chance," said Jabe. "They won't give up without a fight. Parliament won't let them." He was right, Exeter was the Parliamentarian's southwest headquarters: its fall would be catastrophic. "I don't reckon he even read it. It'll be the same as Plymouth: same job, same shit. We'd stand more chance if we knocked on the bleddy gate. They're won't give in till they're starving."

William nodded and pointed to a group of officers heading for Hopton's tent. "The big boys are gathering," he said, "looking for fresh ideas."

"Fresh ideas!" said Jabe. "I either sit on my ass and wait or we attack and I don't fancy doing either."

In fact there were many inside the walls who would be happy to open the gates. Royalists certainly, but there were even Parliamentarians who feared the consequences of holding out. They knew that under the rules of war, a successful storming could result in every soldier being killed, perhaps civilians too. It could mean a bloodbath and the destruction of their homes. For the mayor, it was a difficult decision. Early surrender could lead to a court martial and execution. Ultimately, their supplies would run out but for the moment they were well armed and had plenty of food. They would fight on.

William raised his musket and fired a shot at one of the defenders on the wall but with his usual accuracy, he missed by some distance. After that there was the occasional exchange of musket fire but nothing meaningful, it relieved the boredom but little else.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December Hopton issued another summons. This time he received a reply – an outright refusal. The next day he prepared for an assault and during the night his guns opened up. Far from giving in, the mayor sent out a large force to attack them. It was a party of horse and musketeers under Colonel Ruthin: they'd raced up from Dartmouth to bolster the defence.

“Another surprise,” said Jabe. “Why don’t we just pack up and go home. We aren’t never going to get in there.”

News that Henry Grey, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Stamford, was heading their way was enough to make the Royalists do just that. Hopton knew that he would stand little chance and he ordered an immediate retreat. The despondent army marched away to the west, not in particularly good order.

“All this way to achieve bugger all,” said Jabe. “Just as well we stayed in Cornwall.”

“We’re still alive aren’t we?” said William. “Still here to fight another day.”

“Still here? I’m bleddy knackered.”

“Well I aren’t too bad, not for a granddad.”

Jabe smiled, “Ah, I thought you’d forgotten that. We’ve truded a few miles since then.”

“That’s true enough, it’s been some bleddy miles.”

“I tell you what though, Ralphy Boy must be having nightmares about Colonel bleddy Ruthin. They reckon he’s going to try and take our cannon and then chase us back into Cornwall.”

“Just let him try,” replied William. “Just let the bugger try.”

It was a subdued Cornish Army that marched into Crediton where they took what food they needed. The town’s loyalty to Parliament cost it dear. The horse and foot camped there for a day but the artillery and guard of dragoons was sent on ahead to avoid it falling into Ruthin’s hands. “Not a bad ploy,” said William, “Hopton’s keeping us between Ruthin and the artillery. He’s gotta get passed us to take it.”

Jabe frowned, “Yeah, that makes me feel a lot better!”

When they’d rested, the infantry and cavalry headed for Okehampton and from there to Bridestowe. Once again, the artillery had been sent in an advance party. As they approached the village they came under attack, Ruthin’s threat was real. He was intent on chasing them back over the border. It was little more than a skirmish involving the enemy’s advance force and some of the Royalist horse. William and Jabe were not involved and knew little about it other than being told that Ruthin’s lot had been driven off. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, Hopton and his army marched back into Launceston, it was not the victorious return he’d planned.

William embraced his son. “Richard, I’m some glad to see you again.” Jabe chose not to intrude on the family reunion and turned to walk away but William called him over. “Jabe, Jabe, over here, I want you to meet my son. This is Richard.”

The little man was delighted to be included and he strode over. “Pleased to meet you, if you’re half as good a man as your father then you’ll do for me.”

Later that night the three men ate together and Richard heard about the battles. “We fought well, it was a hard campaign but plagued by bad luck.”

Jabe grunted, “And that bleddy Scot.”



## Chapter 22

### The Battle of Braddock Down

Parliament knew that victory could only be achieved if Cornwall fell. Not only would its capture be a major blow to Royalist morale but it would also prevent supplies being landed there and remove the threat to Plymouth. The Earl of Stamford's Army was in Exeter. He planned to combine with Ruthin and together, take Cornwall.

Colonel Ruthin had beaten Hopton at Modbury and at Exeter. He'd then chased him back to Cornwall and his reward was to be promoted to general. His confidence was high as he prepared his invasion plan.

The Tamar bridges were heavily guarded so he decided to bombard the Saltash defences. He would then cross by boat and take the town. Once there, he would seek out and destroy the Cornish Royalist Army. For almost a week his land artillery and warships pounded the town. It was indiscriminate and Saltash suffered heavy damage – much of it lay in ruins.

Ruthin pondered his next move: to wait until Stamford arrived or press on and complete the job on his own. There was little movement on the Cornish side as his flotilla set out and headed for the west bank of the Tamar. Following the bombardment, little resistance was expected but such thoughts were quickly dispelled as the Royalists opened fire. The defences were still intact. Ruthin had no choice but to abandon the landing and the boats swung around and headed back to Devon.

The Royalist Army gathered at Bodmin and after leading the defence of Saltash, Hopton joined it there. The force had been bolstered by the arrival of the Cornish posse but they were under no illusion regarding the combined strength of Stamford's and Ruthin's armies. Reality took over and the euphoria at Ruthin's rebuff at Saltash soon gave way to despair. Not only were the Cornish short of men and money for their pay, they were also short of munitions.

Cornwall was not impregnable. It had a long coastline to protect and, to the east, the Tamar with many crossings. Three main land routes ran from the east, all involved a river crossing either by boat or over a narrow bridge. The Royalist defences were stretched. The roads were in a poor state, little more than muddy tracks, totally unsuitable for carriages and difficult for heavy artillery. Lanes ran from the main routes to the small towns and hamlets but their condition was even worse.

William was in a sombre mood. "Sounds like that army from Somerset has joined up with Ruthin's lot. As soon as they cross the river, they'll be on us."

Jabe was thoughtful. "And we couldn't even take care of Ruthin on his own." He was right, it was going to be an unequal battle.

But William's news was premature: the two armies were still at separate locations. The Earl of Stamford was at Exeter and Ruthin was still on the east bank of the Tamar, facing Saltash.

The Royalist leaders tried to boost morale but it was difficult, even the officers despaired at the outcome. What was clear to everyone, however, was that they couldn't afford to fail. Defeat would be the end for Cornish resistance. In Hopton's speech he told them that despite the difficulties, they had to defend their corner of England. A voice from the ranks reminded him it was Cornwall. It sounded very much like Jabe.

General Ruthin knew that Hopton had withdrawn from Saltash and that a crossing should now be possible. The thought of taking Cornwall without Stamford appealed to him and in the second week of January, he

made his move. He divided his force. Ruthin set out for Saltash in his fleet of small boats. With him were his Scottish professional soldiers and Alexander Carew's regiment of Cornish horse. Colonel William Strode moved north, along the line of the Tamar, and bombarded the crossing at Newbridge, near Gunnislake. He had a mixed force of troops including units from Dorset, Somerset and Devon, together with a small Cornish regiment of foot under Francis Buller. Strode's intention was to cross into Cornwall and make for Liskeard where he would rejoin Ruthin. They would then decide whether to wait for Stamford who would arrive via Launceston, or proceed on their own.

Newbridge was defended by a detachment of Royalist dragoons. They were small in number, too small to hold it for long. Instead, they decided to destroy it but before they could do so they were forced to retire to defensive positions. Strode had a difficult decision to make. To force his way across the narrow bridge would cost many lives but he couldn't afford to delay. He sent a party of dragoons along the riverbank to look for a shallow crossing and they managed to make their way over the river and circle behind the Royalist defenders. It was a brief action and the Royalist were either killed or captured and Strode's Parliamentary force crossed into Cornwall.

The mood at Bodmin was sombre. Jabe had overheard one of the officers say that Ruthin was in Cornwall. "They reckon Stamford's still in Devon so maybe Ruthin may be going to start without him."

"That's good," said William. "I mean, without Stamford we can beat him."

"Come on, you know we don't stand a bleddy chance."

William shook his head, "My God, I bet you're some fun at Christmas."

"Well, everyone's fed up. No pay, nothing to fight with and two bleddy great armies heading our way. I know a few who've already left for home." He sat cross-legged, shaping a piece of wood with his knife. "Could be we chose the wrong side. I got a mind to head on back to Penryn."

William was thoughtful. If they failed then the fighting could reach his home. "What good would running do? You may as well stop and fight here as wait to be killed under your own roof. At least you'll be able to tell your grandchildren you died fighting for the King!"

Jabe nodded before he realised what William had said. He chuckled. "You're a King's man, that's for sure. I wish my faith in him were as strong as yours. See, I keep thinking about what I'm doing for him then asking myself what he's ever done for me."

"He's the King. He don't have to do nothing for you. You've been listening to too many stories from Parliament."

Jabe paused to consider his next argument. "See, the way I see it is that he runs the country but it's all take, take, take. He's so busy thinking of new ways to tax us there's no time left for nothing else."

"Pay much tax do you?"

"Well no, I don't, but I know some who do. Then there's the pirates, what's he done about them? You're up on the north coast but down in Penryn anyone there'll tell you about the pirates."

"Pirates, I've heard about these bleddy pirates, what's it all about?"

“There you are: you don’t even know what they’re doing to us. We’ve got privateers coming in from Dunkirk and then there’s they Barbary ones, they’re even worse. They hang around off Cornwall and Scilly attacking our fishing boats, they even come on land and carry off our men and women.”

William wasn’t sure whether to believe the stories but rather than hear any more against the King he changed the subject. “They reckon there’s Papists fighting in our army, some of our own and a few from Ireland.”

“Could be, I think my family came over from Ireland so praps I’m one.”

“If I were you I wouldn’t shout too loud about that.”

“Why’s that then?”

“Well it seems like the other side are going to treat them like traitors, top them without question.”

Jabe hesitated. “Come to think of it, praps we’re from Wales.”

The Royalists were at Moilesborrow Down near Lostwithiel, they had five volunteer regiments, the Cornish trained bands and the posse – about 5,000 men in all. “Hello,” said Jabe, “what’s up now?” The arrival of a messenger caused a great deal of interest. “More bad news I spose.”

But he was wrong. A gale had driven three Parliamentary warships into Falmouth Haven: they were loaded with weapons and money – enough to pay the men. It was a tremendous piece of good fortune and a great morale booster. “There you are,” said William, “that’s what comes of fighting for the King. It proves God’s on our side.”

Jabe smirked. He’d little time for such weak-minded drivel. “Anyway,” he said, “we’re still up against it. Once Ruthin gets here, and then Stamford, we’ll be overrun.”

Ruthin was making good speed along the narrow Cornish roads. He was moving so quickly that his lumbering artillery was left far behind. He knew that Stamford hadn’t yet crossed into Cornwall and was keen to finish the job before he arrived.

The King had directed that Lord Mohun, Sir Ralph Hopton, Sir John Berkeley and Colonel William Ashburnham would have joint command. Hopton despaired. It was leadership by committee and typical of King Charles’ lack of decisiveness. Fortunately, the four commanders recognised how ridiculous it was and the other three invited the more experienced Sir Ralph Hopton to become commander-in-chief.

The Royalist soldiers knew it was going to be a difficult battle but it was with much improved morale that they marched from Bodmin to Boconnoc Park, the home of Lord Mohun.

“Here we go then,” said Jabe, “death or glory and I know which is more likely.”

“Shut up you little runt,” said William. “I’m fed up with your moaning. We’re on Cornish soil now so this time it’s going to be different.”

Jabe was suitably chastened and it was a full two minutes before he spoke again. “I don’t spose you saved any food from breakfast.”

That night they camped in the park, a few in tents or under makeshift covers to keep out the winter weather. Most had just the sky for a roof. William Ennor and Jabe Retallack were in Lord Mohun’s regiment

and Richard was with Sir Bevil Grenville. Hopton didn't know what Ruthin planned but he knew that his only chance was to bring him to battle before Stamford arrived. He called together his officers for a Council of War and proposed that they should go on the offensive, to seek out and attack Ruthin's Army. The plan was simple and was accepted without question.

William rose early. The night hadn't been good for him and Jabe awoke to find him sitting up, deep in thought.

"Here Will, who's this Ann? You've been on about her all night?"

"Ann? Did I mention her?"

"Mention her? You had me a bit worried there once."

William laughed, "Don't worry, even fast asleep I wouldn't fancy you."

"Who's she then, your wife?"

"Something like that, I'll tell you about her sometime."

"You told me a bit about her last night. Anyway, you'd better get a move on, the food's ready."

They finished eating and hurried back to collect their equipment: it would soon be time to leave. William and Jabe talked about many things as they marched. As ever, it was the little man who led the conversation but William didn't mind, he was glad to have something to take his thoughts off the coming battle.

It was about noon on the 19<sup>th</sup> January when they found Ruthin's Army, on the high ground to the north-east of Boconnoc House, near to Braddock Church. Few of the Cornish had any fighting experience: just a few weeks before they'd been working in the mines or on the land. In contrast, some of the officers were professional soldiers: Ruthin and Hopton had fought together for the Protestant faith in Europe and Ireland.

General Ruthin seemed as eager as Hopton to get on with the battle, taking Cornwall without Stamford's help would be a personal triumph. Neither side had any artillery: speed had convinced the Royalists to leave theirs at Bodmin and Ruthin's was still lumbering along the lanes from Liskeard. The two armies faced each other across the field. William gripped his musket and prayed to God for courage. Jabe was shaking and William asked if he was alright.

The little man nodded his reply, his eyes fixed on the enemy. "I hope I do better than in my last fight."

"Against who?" asked William.

"The wife, she's more frightening than this lot put together."

William smiled: the little man was a joker but now it was bravado. He looked across at Grenville's regiment, his eyes searching for his son among the pikemen.

Richard was ready. He'd said his prayers and now he glanced around nervously. "Bugger," he said, "I need another piss."

The Royalist infantry was on the west side of Braddock Down, placed there to prevent any further advance into Cornwall. The cavalry and dragoons protected its flanks. Travelling without artillery had meant a quicker advance but how they could do with their big guns now. Despite Hopton wanting to begin before Stamford arrived, there was no immediate attack. The armies faced each other with only shouts and the occasional musket shot. William used the time to practise loading but he was frustrated at his fumbling attempts and at the delay. Some of the foot soldiers fought in the colours of their commanders but many wore civilian clothes with field signs of coloured paper or ribbons in their hats to distinguish them from the enemy. William hoped that he would be able to tell friend from foe.

There was a brief skirmish between a party of Royalist dragoons and the Parliamentary horse but when the Cornish horse went to their rescue, things died down again. William's nerves were on edge.

Then came a clear sign it was about to begin, Hopton ordered his army to pray. At this sight the Parliamentarians scoffed and shouted that it was a Cavaliers' Mass. The abuse was short-lived: Hopton had a surprise for the gloating Parliamentarians. He'd secretly brought up two minion-drakes from Lord Mohun's house and hidden them behind his horse. At his signal his troopers moved apart and the guns fired. The deadly salvo fell into the midst of the unsuspecting Parliamentarians, one moment they were confident, laughing and shouting and the next they were in disarray. Many were killed or injured and as their officers frantically tried to get them back into some order, the Cornish infantry and horse charged, pike in the centre, musketeers on each side and horse on the flanks. It was a fearful attack. Grenville led his pikemen down the hill and up the other side, shouting and screaming as loud as they could in a wild and terrifying charge. Anthony Payne carried the colours, a giant of a man from Stratton. Richard was in the thick of the action, all fear removed by the speed of the attack. A musket ball just missed him and he could see the reason for his good fortune. The enemy musketeer had dropped his weapon and was gripping his injured arm. Richard drove his pike into the man's stomach. It sliced open and the tangled entrails poured from his torn belly.

The frenzied attack was too much for the Parliamentary soldiers and they scattered like birds in a cornfield. They'd not withstood one attack and now they were scampering away in terror, back towards Liskeard. Soon, the narrow road was choked with running soldiers and as the heavy guns and powder wagons arrived the chasing Royalist Army captured them. This was no organised retreat: it was a rout. Ruthin's musketeers, placed in the hedges to prevent any counter, lost their nerve and fled but there was more terror at Liskeard. The town was staunchly Royalist and as the terrified soldiers ran through the streets, the people came out to join in the attack. Those who managed to escape headed for Saltash.

The Cornish pikeman had been magnificent and Richard had performed well. After the initial artillery salvo it was their charge that had struck terror into the enemy. Two hundred Parliamentarians had been killed and over a thousand captured.

The Earl of Stamford reached Launceston where he heard of the defeat. He immediately ordered a retreat to Tavistock and from there he headed for Plymouth. Sir John Berkeley and Colonel Ashburnham together with Grenville, Slanning and Trevanion were sent to intercept him while Hopton and Lord Mohun continued to chase Ruthin's Army.

Memories of Modbury had now been erased. General Ruthin had been reckless in giving battle before Stamford arrived. He'd gambled and lost. The defeat had been total and now his concern was to hold Saltash long enough to effect an escape. He'd little time to fortify the town.

Sir Ralph Hopton and Lord Mohun quartered at Liskeard for the night and at 4.00pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January, as a Royalist ship in the river delivered its salvos, they attacked Saltash. About three hours later, with little powder remaining, Ruthin retreated. He made for the river and took a boat for Plymouth. Once there, he would answer to Stamford for his actions. His men scrambled into any craft they could find but in

desperation they overloaded them and many capsized. The stricken army made a pitiful sight as the men tried to save themselves: many escaped but others drowned. A further 140 men, twenty guns and a ship of 400 tons was captured.

William was jubilant. The retreat from Exeter had been humiliating but this had more than made up for it. Cornwall had been held for the King and Saltash was secured as a base for the siege of Plymouth. The important routes to the continent would remain open. Credit was due to Hopton and his commanders but there was also high praise for the ordinary Cornish soldiers. Hopton gave thanks for the victory but he knew it could have been different. Had fate not sent the three ships into Falmouth Haven then Cornwall could well have fallen.

## Chapter 23

Ruthin's Army had been decimated and now the Cornish Royalists threatened Plymouth from across the narrow strip of water. A single bell rang out the alarm. William listened to the echo across the water: it was a pleasing sound. He could imagine the panic and the frantic efforts to get the defences in order.

If anyone had harboured thoughts of the glamour of war then it disappeared at Braddock Down. Men from both sides had fled the battle, the threatened penalty of hanging, far from their minds.

William and Jabe were eating as a party of soldiers approached. They had with them a young lad. His hands were tied behind his back and his face was streaked with tears. The boy had deserted and been found hiding in the woods.

"My God," said Jabe. "He can't be more than sixteen, what are they going to do to him?"

William looked tense. "Not what I'm thinking, surely."

Many wartime offences carried the ultimate penalty. The list varied from army to army but murder, mutiny and desertion were common to them all. Lesser crimes could attract corporal punishment, mutilation or other ways of inflicting pain. In practice, deserters were often rounded up and returned to service but the threat of execution was there as a deterrent. The boy had been singled out for punishment, as an example to the others.

The hangman's rope was brought out and placed over his head. For a moment it went quiet. Then the shouts started. The boy was one of them and they were not prepared to see him hang. The officer in charge hesitated but he had his orders and couldn't back down. He nodded for the sentence to proceed. William was pushed to the front. He looked back at the others but then approached the officer. The hanging party raised their muskets.

"Get back man unless you're offering to take his place." He motioned the guard to prepare their muskets.

William swallowed hard but stood his ground. "You can't do this Sir, he's no more than a boy." With that, about a dozen other men stepped forward and stood with William. Others began shouting and shaking their fists.

"We're here to tell you that he's not going to hang," said William. "Give the order and it'll be your last."

The hangman hesitated and turned to the officer. By now the boy was near to collapse. Six muskets were trained on the crowd but the men holding them knew that their shots against such a huge number would

be suicide. Without being told, they lowered them again. The officer knew that his superiors would be furious but he knew also that he had no choice. The sentence was commuted to a whipping. The boy was in no state to receive any punishment and after two token lashes, he was set free to prolonged cheers. William had established himself as unofficial leader but amongst the officers he was already being spoken of as a troublemaker.

Plymouth was staunchly Parliamentary and with St Nicholas Island in the middle of the Sound, it was a safe haven for the navy. Mayor Christopher Ceely urged the soldiers and civilians to improve the defences.

William Ennor looked at the far riverbank: he knew what Hopton had in mind. It was another river crossing.

As before, the Cornish trained bands refused to cross into Devon. Their job was to defend Cornwall and they wouldn't go beyond its border. Hopton coaxed and threatened them but they wouldn't relent. His force would consist of just his volunteer army, too small for a full siege.

The rain was torrential and the progress slow as they moved the heavy guns along the muddy lanes between the Tamar and Plymouth. Finally, they arrived in front of the town and Hopton arranged the regiments into a blockade. For many, it was the first time they'd crossed into England. Richard was not with them: he was on garrison duty at Launceston.

"Here Will," said Jabe, "who's the big bugger carrying the colours?"

"Richard said he's called Payne: he works for Sir Bevil. He's over seven feet tall and they say he's as strong as an ox. Good job he's on our side."

"Over seven feet..."

"What're you thinking?" asked William.

Jabe chuckled, "That we'd better get to the food before him."

The news from Kingsbridge was received with cheers, Sir John Berkeley had seen off the Parliamentary officer, James Chudleigh. They couldn't know that the young officer would later return to haunt them. For the moment he'd retreated to Tavistock and then to Okehampton leaving the southern area of Devon reasonably safe in Royalist hands. By late January 1643 the Royalists were back at Modbury, satisfied that they'd secured the eastern flank of the Plymouth blockade.

Both sides were battle-weary and news of a possible cease-fire quickly spread. Rumour was that it would apply to both Cornwall and Devon. "They're meeting somewhere near Plymouth," said Jabe, "Some place belonging to Robert Trelawney. Hopton, Mohun and Godolphin are going to sit around the table with Stamford, Buller and George Chudleigh. Bleddy strange if you ask me. One minute they're fighting and the next they're having a cosy chat."

Hopes were high that it would lead to the end of the war in the region but after hours of discussion, negotiations broke down. The fighting would continue.

There were many complaints about the way in which Francis Basset was collecting money for the Royalist war effort. At first it was voluntary but before long it became a request with sword in hand. Frequent raids across the Tamar for goods and money proved more popular except to the Devon merchants. Ironically, the money taken was used as an inducement to the Cornish soldiers to fight in Devon.

Stories of Devon men attacking the Cornish soldiers with pick-axes and homemade weapons were common but William knew the same would be true in his hamlet if they were invaded. These were desperate times and the locals were driven to defend themselves.

“Bugger me, they’ve done some work since we left,” said Jabe looking up at the new line of defences in front of Plymouth. “Twill be even tougher now.” The watching and waiting was tedious and the lack of news from elsewhere made them feel isolated. Even when reports did filter through it was difficult to know which were true. One that came in from Plympton was unbelievable and William went to ask an officer if it was true. There was little detail but he was told that Sidney Godolphin, one of the leading Royalists, had been killed in an ambush. He heard later that he’d been shot as he rode into Chagford.

## Chapter 24

John Ennor paused for a drink. He sat facing the lane where he could see anyone who approached. He took the book from his pocket and turned the pages to where he’d left off. He understood its significance now: it was the Parliamentary spy network in Tywarnhayle. He tried to decipher the initials: HM was a mystery but he wondered if the letters had been reversed and they simply referred to Marcus Hodge, the Reverend Marcus Hodge, the dead priest. The other letters were a mystery.

As his younger sister approached, he slipped the book inside his clothes. “Hi Ruth, I didn’t hear you.”

“I guessed that: what were you looking at?”

“Nothing...it was nothing.”

She laughed, “Oh John. You’re not a good liar, you’ll never go to heaven.”

“It’s a book, but I can’t show you. If it fell into the wrong hands many men could lose their lives.”

“Oh John, what are you mixed up in. Cath and I are so worried about you.”

“Never you mind, I can take care of myself. I just want your word you’ll tell no one about the book.”

“Not even Cath?”

“Not even Cath.”

As she left, John resumed his work. He called to the oxen to pull. He knew that she would tell Cath. Every so often he glanced at the book and tried to decipher the names. John Pym and Sir John Eliot were there but Eliot’s name was crossed through. He’d died in the Tower and the King had refused to release his body for burial in Cornwall.

## Chapter 25

### To Modbury Again



William and Jabe were at Stoke where Hopton, William Godolphin and Lord Mohun maintained a tight grip on Plymouth. Berkeley and Grenville had returned to Plympton with the full story of Sidney Godolphin. His death had affected everyone.

Jabe was even more despondent. "I don't reckon Plymouth will ever fall. With they merchant ships and the navy there it can last out for ever." William didn't argue.

There was a rumour circulating that the Parliamentarians had gathered an army of eight or nine thousand at Kingsbridge. Soldiers had been brought in from all over Devon and bolstered by Clubmen armed with pitchforks and billhooks tied to poles. These civilians were determined to help the Parliamentary Army clear the Cornish from their county. Another story was of a small party of enemy cavalry at Aveton Gifford, seemingly under the command of Major General James Chudleigh.

Royalist officers Sir Nicholas Slanning and Colonel Trevanion were at Modbury with 2,000 troops. Their orders were to prevent any enemy advance towards Plymouth. Trevanion commanded his own regiment of foot and also that of the late Sidney Godolphin. He'd erected barricades at the entrances to the village and posted musketeers in the hedges. His five light guns and party of dragoons stood at the ready. They held good defensive positions but if the rumoured size of the enemy force was correct then they would be heavily outnumbered.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> February, early in the day, Chudleigh attacked. It was ferocious and the Royalists scampered back from their barricades and into the village. The fighting continued all day and into the night. Darkness descended with men firing blindly in the general direction of the enemy. By the next morning the Royalists were low on ammunition and they began a retreat from the village. At first it was orderly but as soon as Chudleigh became aware of what was happening, he sent his full army into attack. It became a mad dash for safety. Most fled down a narrow lane, Runaway Lane as their attackers later called it. They left behind about 100 dead, 150 prisoners and their field guns.

Unbeknown to Slanning and Trevanion, this was a co-ordinated attack. While they were fighting to hold Modbury, the Earl of Stamford launched an assault on Hopton's quarters. William reached for his musket and feverishly began to load. "Caught with our pants down again," he shouted. "Come on, let's be at them." They stood little chance and the retreating soldiers from Modbury arrived to find their colleagues already leaving.

Despite the speed of the attack, the Royalists managed to hold off Stamford's force long enough to save most of the carriages and heavy guns. They were taken to the river and ferried across to Saltash. Hopton had managed to order a rendezvous and the fleeing Cornish troops made for Roborough Down. From there they headed for Tavistock. William and Jabe were on the move again but this time it was them being chased.

Stamford and Chudleigh had delivered a crushing blow to the Cornish Army and a bloody nose to its commander. It seemed to Jabe that Hopton could only win on Cornish soil.

Stories of Parliamentary cruelty spread. Prisoners being tied back-to-back and thrown into the sea, men being half-hanged and then cut down and roasted on open fires: each one more alarming than the last. William raised his hand. "Shut up for a minute, I'm trying to listen." It was another story and whether true or not, it was greeted with alarm. "It's that bastard Stamford," exclaimed William. "He's done a deal with the Barbary pirates. He's going to swap the prisoners for slaves." Shouts of anger filled the air but there was little they could do. If it were true then the unfortunate men would have to suffer their fate. It was not until they reached Tavistock that they were told that the fear of similar action by the Royalists prevented Stamford carrying out his threat. It seemed that all honour had deserted the enemy camp.

## Chapter 26

### The Truce

William raised his tankard in a toast to the Queen. She'd just returned from the continent where she'd arranged arms and ammunition for the King's cause. The Parliamentarians now hated her but here it was different and William was proud to call her Queen. "I may have had some doubts when they married," he said. "Her being French and all that but I reckon it was the best thing he ever did." Within a few weeks the House of Commons impeached her for high treason.

Once again, a local cease-fire was on the agenda and General Ruthin, the Earl of Stamford and Sir Ralph Hopton met to negotiate. Both sides agreed that the first proposal had contained too many conditions and before long there was agreement. It would begin on the 28<sup>th</sup> February and last for seven days.

Jabe was quick to offer his support but it came with conditions. His opinion was that the seven-day break should be used to get Cornwall out of the war, Devon too if that was what they wanted. Sir Ralph Hopton had other ideas. He used the time to rest his troops and to build up his stock of ammunition. Not the actions of a man following Jabe's advice. When the week ended there was no enthusiasm to start fighting again and the cessation was extended for a further twenty days.

Not everyone was in favour of the truce and when news of the local arrangement reached London, the Parliamentary leaders condemned it. They sent an official to investigate but with typical West Country stubbornness, the treaty was extended twice more and Jabe was even more convinced he would soon be heading for home.

It was not to be however, and a final expiry date was set: hostilities would re-commence on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1643. Both sides had made good use of the cessation. Royalist defences had been improved both at Bodmin and at Launceston where a part of the town wall had been rebuilt.

In mid-April Sir Bevil Grenville's regiment arrived in Launceston to be joined shortly after by Sir Ralph Hopton's. By now, Richard Ennor knew the town well.

As the resumption date approached, the Parliamentary leaders became increasingly eager to resume and some even admitted their error in agreeing to the truce in the first place. Perhaps though, that was for London ears. Whatever the reasons, they were now well prepared to attempt another invasion of Cornwall.

## Chapter 27

Life on the farm was a struggle. For John it was a never-ending cycle of work and Joan and the girls had to help more and more. It had been six months since his father and brother had left, it was not the short war that William had predicted.

Joan shouted from the window, "Have you girls fed the pigs? Must I do everything?"

"Well where's John?" shouted Catherine, "I spose he's off giving his girl a hand again."

"I don't expect that's all he's giving her," whispered Ruth.

"That's enough of that sort of talk. I've warned him about her but he won't be told."

Catherine walked over to her mother, hoping that her mood was good. "Mother, now that I'm fifteen, can I begin to see Matthew James? He's a nice boy and I like him very much. He might even help out on the farm."

"You can ask him to tea but you're not going to see him on your own."

"What, ask him here so grandmother can have a go at him? That's sure to put him off."

Joan ignored her reply: she'd seen John creeping around the end of the building. "There's no need to pretend you've been working. I know what you've been up to."

"That's good," replied John, "Then I don't have to tell you." His mother tutted and went inside the cottage.

"Oh go on John. What have you been doing?" He smiled as the two girls sniggered but then they added, "Two men called earlier: they were asking for you. They were well dressed and riding fine horses."

John's expression changed. "When? Who were they?"

"Oh I don't know," said Catherine. "They were friendly but wanted to speak to Mother."

John hurried into the cottage to ask his mother what they wanted. "I don't know," she replied. "They said they'd call again. I don't know who they were and what's more I don't care. If you're in trouble then that's your problem." John walked out of the door. "Now where're you going?"

It was late when he returned. His grandmother was asleep in her usual place, in the armchair by the fire. The rest of the family had climbed the ladder to the sleeping area. The smoke from the furze and turf on the fire stung his eyes. With any luck the old woman would die through lack of air. He grabbed some dry bread and hauled himself up the ladder. It creaked under his weight. Maybe he should've bedded down with the animals. His sisters stirred as he joined them on the straw but there was no doubting his mother was asleep: her snoring would wake the devil. He crunched the bread noisily not caring if she woke. Despite what they thought, he'd not seen Jenefer today but right now he wished he was sharing her bed.

The next morning he rose early. "Well Mother, did they men call back?"

"You mean the ones you're trying to avoid? Yeah, they called, and this time they left a message. They've got a job for you. They said that if you know what's good for you, you'll contact them."

"Like Hell I will."

"That's up to you but they said that if you don't, then they'll be back with swords in their hands."

John shrugged. "Well, did they say who they were?"

"No, they didn't say but one of them owns the mine where Richard worked. They said it was because of him that they'd go light on you. I asked about the job but they wouldn't say."

The old woman looked up from the fire. "I knew you'd bring us trouble, as sure as the sun rises you'll not see your next birthday."

“Oh shut up you old bag. Why don’t you go and live with your precious Bassets of Tehidy. They must want a cleaner.”

Joan raised her hand to strike him but the wheezing from her mother took her attention. “Ungrateful boy,” she shouted, “get out and don’t you ever talk to your grandmother like that again.”

John hadn’t asked where he was to meet the two men but he’d done some checking and knew they were often at the alehouse in Churchtown. He knew he could no longer avoid them. He took the old sword from over the fire and set off to find them.

## Chapter 28

William had often longed for a break from the monotony of working the land but would have preferred something a little less dangerous. He was also glad to be away from Joan and her mother but not Ann: he missed her so much.

“Praps that little wench who carries the water could ease my mind” he joked.

“Give it a go,” was the response.

This was men’s banter: he guessed she was about twenty years younger than him but what the hell. He watched as she carried her heavy load: she didn’t seem to mind the attention, perhaps she welcomed it. He settled down to clean his musket. Maybe tomorrow, he thought.

## Chapter 29

John stood at the door of the alehouse. He was nervous but he knew he had to go in.

“Ah, Mr Ennor, it’s good to see you again. I’m sorry you couldn’t stop for a chat the last time we met.”

John’s mouth was dry but he forced a reply. “Well if I knew you wanted to buy me a drink I’d have come sooner.” The older man smiled at the response and John continued. “So, what do you want with me? You know of course, that I could tell everyone that you killed the priest.”

“And they’d believe you would they? My word against yours: me being a pillar of the community and you, if I might venture to say, nothing!”

It was clear which of the two men was the leader. John had asked around about the white horse and he now knew for sure that the man was local landowner James Treleigh. The priest had spoken of him.

The other man joined in. “Look Boy, your life hangs by a thread and it wouldn’t take much for us to cut it and let you fall. But we have a proposition for you, one that could save your neck and put a penny or two in your pocket. With your father away I expect that would come in handy.”

“So?” said John.

As the second man was about to speak again, Treleigh cut across him. “Tell me who the priest worked for.”

“The priest? For God I imagine.” James Treleigh didn’t smile this time: he stared at him with piercing eyes that demanded a reply. “I don’t know, I swear.”

Treleigh looked him up and down. “Then give me the book.”

“The book?” replied John.

“Yes Boy, the book. The black book you took from the priest’s study.”

“I no longer have it – I lost it in the chase.”

Treleigh stared at him again. “You’re a liar Boy. What was in it?”

“I can’t say Sir, I never learned to read.”

“I want that book Boy, and if you don’t bring it to me then I’ll have Tregonning cut off your balls.” Nat Tregonning was a large man, tall, overweight and surly. His appearance was not helped by an old wound which crossed his right cheek at an angle.

John’s eyes flashed nervously. Treleigh knew he had him on the hook but to John’s surprise he said, “No matter, we’ll leave it for the moment. Right now you need to be clear of the situation you’re in. When I shout, you come crawling. Otherwise it’s ...” He made the sign of a slit throat. “And just in case you’re not convinced, you should know that I’ve met your sister. I’ve a mind to know her better if you know what I mean.”

John placed his hand on his sword. “You bastard, you leave her alone.”

“Manners, Mr Ennor. Just remember who is the master and who is the servant in this little arrangement. I only mention your sister in case you’ve a mind to run out on me. You play fair with me and she’s safe. Cross me and...come to think of it I win either way. Now, Mr Tregonning here will be your contact, we won’t meet again.”

Tregonning chuckled, “And you’ll find me very fair Mr Ennor, now get your ass out of here and run home to Mammy.”

## **Chapter 30**

### **The Battle of Launceston**

The Earl of Stamford was at Exeter, suffering from gout. He complained of excruciating pain to all who would listen and as he was the commander that meant everyone. He called his officers together and outlined the next offensive: it was to begin as soon as the truce ended. Major General James Chudleigh would lead it.

James Chudleigh was just 25 years old, the eldest son of Sir George Chudleigh: a member of the Parliamentary Committee of Devon. Stamford told his officers that he expected nothing less than the destruction of the Cornish Army and the capture of Cornwall.

A few days later the Parliamentary Army marched out of the gate and headed for Lifton, a couple of miles from the Cornish border. James Chudleigh planned to wait there until the end of the truce. Their first target would be the ancient town of Launceston. They would strike hard, before the dispersed regiments could regroup. At first light, he moved his army the short distance to the Devon side of Poulson Bridge.

The previous evening, the mayor of Launceston held a dinner for the Royalist leaders. It was a welcome relief to the pressure of war but Hopton found it difficult to relax. He knew that the enemy was preparing to attack but he'd no idea where it would be. His army was spread out along the west bank of the Tamar, covering all the bridges and crossing points. Launceston was left with only 1,200 infantry and no large cannon.

A small party of Royalist dragoons stood guard at Poulson Bridge, their orders were to raise the alarm and delay any attackers for as long as possible. At midnight, the truce ended and almost immediately the bells began to ring in Launceston. A report had come in that an attack was under way but it soon became clear that it was a false alarm: either someone had panicked or it was a deliberate attempt to increase the tension. Richard's nerves were on edge as the guard was stood down.

Just a few hours later, the first day of the resumption of hostilities, James Chudleigh swept aside the defending dragoons and seized Poulson Bridge. His army crossed into Cornwall and began the uphill march towards Launceston. The Royalist Army had assembled in the parish church to offer prayers for the coming battle: by necessity it was a brief service. Hopton now knew the point of attack and he sent messengers to the other units along the border. They were to join him with all speed. He left half of Grenville's infantry to protect Launceston and led the remainder eastwards, to Windmill Hill. Richard was with them.

The Royalists took their positions and waited. The forward musketeers were at the foot of the hill, in the hedges where there was some protection from enemy fire. The pikemen and the remainder of the musketeers were on the slopes and at the top, where an ancient earthwork provided cover. From this high spot, Richard Ennor had a panoramic view of the countryside: from Dartmoor to the Cornish moors, down the Tamar and, in the other direction, to Launceston Castle. He waited nervously: the tedium of digging tin from the bowels of the earth suddenly seemed attractive. The coming battle would be another stern test, equally as great as Braddock Down. He prayed for the same result. The sky was cloudless, a fine day, too good a day to die.

With enough men the position could be held but even when William Godolphin's regiment joined them, they were still heavily outnumbered. By 9.00am Chudleigh had reached the outskirts of the town and an hour later his musketeers trudged across the field towards the first line of defence. His artillery pounded the hill and two young pikemen with Richard dropped their weapons and scurried away. Fear gripped him and he considered doing the same.

The musketeers exchanged fire. A few of Chudleigh's men fell but the numbers were overwhelming and as they drew closer, the Royalists retreated to the next line of cover. Smoke obscured the view and the sound of musket and artillery was deafening. The attack was relentless, unstoppable, and Richard knew that if he was going to run then it had to be now. He could still see the two men in the distance. He thought of his father, and what he would think. He gripped his pike: he would stay and fight.

Hopton shouted to his men to hold their positions but it was hopeless, they would soon be overwhelmed. He thought of the casualties, of the young men who would die, but this wasn't just another battle, it was the defence of Cornwall. If they failed then it was lost. For James Chudleigh it had all gone to plan and he urged his men forward.

Richard was watching the action, ready to defend his position when he heard the shouts and gunfire from the south. The battle had been raging for about an hour and now, with immaculate timing, Colonel Slingsby

arrived with Lord Mohun's regiment of Foot. Hopton's orders had got through. As they surged forward, William Ennor looked towards the hill. His instincts told him that Richard was there. Shortly after there was more cheering and this time it was Sir John Berkeley with his regiment of cavalry and dragoons. They swept into the attack and now it was the Parliamentarians who hesitated, uncertain what to do. It was now a different battle and the Royalist reinforcements made an immediate impact as they charged at the beleaguered infantry. Chudleigh's men held their position for the next six hours but their casualties were mounting and survival was now their sole aim.

A new possibility occurred to Hopton, one that would bring benefits far beyond this battle. Rather than push Chudleigh back into Devon, he would trap him in Cornwall and remove him from the war. He sent a regiment of horse to take Poulson Bridge and cut off his escape. As it thundered passed, the retreating Parliamentary foot soldiers prepared to defend their flank but the horsemen swept by, they had another purpose. Chudleigh could only watch as his escape route was closed but fortune is fickle and suddenly Lady Luck swung in his favour. It was his turn to give thanks as Sir John Merrick's London Greycoats and Sir John Northcote's regiment charged the bridge from the Devon side. The escape route remained open.

With his back secure, Chudleigh now turned again to face the enemy. He urged his men to fight and despite the overwhelming odds, they held the line. William's regiment had been chasing hard and his heart was beating fast, his lungs near to bursting. He sheltered behind a hedge and reloaded his musket.

The Royalist defenders on Windmill Hill had poured down to join the relieving regiments and although Chudleigh's musketeers were still firing, they were giving ground, pushed back by the relentless pressure from Hopton's cavalry and foot. By early evening the Royalists were in control but still Chudleigh wouldn't give up.

At 7.00pm Nicholas Slanning and Colonel Trevanion arrived and joined the attack. There could now be only one winner and Hopton, Berkeley and Thomas Basset charged the enemy in a three-pronged offensive. At the same time the Royalist cavalry closed in on the enemy flanks. Chudleigh knew that his mission had failed but he held his position for a further two hours, until late evening. Then, as the light began to fade, he ordered a retreat. His army turned and made its way back across Poulson Bridge and up the road towards Lifton. A determined Cornish Army had seen him off.

Many of the Royalist wanted to give chase, to finish the job. William, despite his tiredness, was among them. "We've got them beat," he shouted, "If we push on now we could wipe them out." But Hopton was less sure. He knew the state of his men and also feared many would again show a reluctance to fight beyond the Tamar.

The Royalists moved across the battlefield searching for the wounded. Discarded weapons and other spoils of war were placed in a pile for later inspection. A few men were examining an old powder wagon left behind by an enemy more concerned with escape. Together with the weapons, this was a real bonus but the delight was short-lived. The explosion sent shards of jagged wood in all directions. Only the wheels of the cart remained and bodies littered the ground. There was no further talk of pursuit that day.

Chudleigh marched his battered and weary army into Lifton where an overnight stay gave his men a chance to tend the wounded. It also gave him time to reflect on yet another futile attempt to occupy Cornwall – and to rehearse his excuses for Stamford

Despite the intensity of the battle, the Parliamentary casualties were light, less than 50 killed or wounded. The Royalist had lost about the same number but it included one notable name: Captain James Basset of Lord Mohun's regiment, the brother of Francis Basset of Tehidy. He lay dead on the battlefield. Just as at Braddock Down, the Parliamentary attack had been repulsed and William and Richard Ennor had played their part in the victory. The chance to secure Cornwall for Parliament would have to wait.

## Chapter 31

Since William and Jabe Retallack had met at Braddock Down they'd watched out for each other. Now they rested side-by-side on open ground, fighting together had forged their friendship.

"You asleep?" asked William.

"Yeah," replied Jabe.

"I can't sleep. Tis the fighting – and the fear."

"Hell Will, I can't imagine you being afraid. I mean, not after seeing you swinging that musket."

"Only a fool would say he felt no fear. Once the fighting starts I'm alright, it takes your mind off it, but tis the waiting I can't take. It knots me up inside, like waiting for your wife to start another argument."

"Got much family?" William paused for thought. "Not too sure how many then," said Jabe with a chuckle.

"No, I was just thinking, about when I was young and how things have turned out. We'd nothing then and my mother and father had a hell of a struggle to raise us. I haven't got much money now but in they days we were always poor and hungry. If it weren't for Father catching fish and rabbits we'd have starved. See, I had four brothers and seven sisters, I was the second eldest and I can hardly remember my mother without a child at her breast." He chuckled, "I wondered why she kept having more children and then Kate explained it to me."

"Who was Kate, your sister?" interrupted Jabe.

William shook his head, "No, she was my first love, probably my only one. We'd been special to each other right up to her fourteenth birthday. She was lovely looking with great dark eyes and long black hair. Her family lived in the mill at the bottom of the hill – where we took the grain to be crushed. We had it all planned. We were going to be married: both families were happy about it. Her father caught us kissing when we were only ten, he cuffed my ear but it was more in fun than anger. But then it ended, when she had the accident. The waterwheel was only moving slowly. Hardly fast enough to do much damage. Her foot slipped on the bank and she fell against it: they said she was dead before she hit the water. The look on her father's face still haunts me. He pulled her out and laid her on the ground. His sobbing was so loud they must've heard it up in the hamlet. She was his only child and he doted on her: he knew what she meant to me and it was as though he'd let me down. He kept saying how sorry he was."

Jabe was clearly moved at the way William was hurting, even after all the years. "I'm sorry too, I really am, especially as this lot has brought it all back to you."

"It took me a while to get over it but two years later I married Joan." William paused. "I don't know what possessed me to do it but there it is."

"You're not fond of her then."

William chuckled, "You could say that! It was all a long time ago but I still can't help wondering what life would've been like with Kate. Anyway, best try and get some sleep, we could be busy tomorrow."



## Chapter 32

The next day, the 24<sup>th</sup> April, the Parliamentary force broke camp and headed for Okehampton, just a few miles away. Once there, James Chudleigh's Army dispersed leaving him with just 1,000 infantry and about 100 horse. The venture into Cornwall had been a disaster and had done nothing for his reputation.

The Royalists spent a comfortable night at Launceston. They'd plucked victory from defeat and were now so confident that some wanted to march for London. Their scouts had followed the retreating army and returned to report that it was reduced in size and couldn't withstand another attack. Despite that, Hopton refused to chase after them unless he had a good size army. His officers assured him that the men were as keen as he was to finish the job and were prepared to take the fight into Devon. It was the answer he wanted and in the late afternoon, he led his army of 3,000 foot, 300 horse and 300 dragoons across Poulson Bridge. They headed for Bridestowe where they joined with some Devon volunteers under Henry Carey, the High Sheriff. They had a brief skirmish with some Parliamentarian horse but they were a large force and soon drove them off. From there they began a night march across Sourton Downs. They would be in good time for a dawn attack on Okehampton. Part of the infantry had been left to guard Launceston: Richard Ennor was with them.

William and Jabe were in the lead section of infantry as they trudged along the dry track. "Here we go again," moaned Jabe. "Much more of this and I'll need a new pair of bleddy boots." Neither was keen to leave Cornwall but both wanted to finish off the enemy. Facing such a small force it wouldn't take long. "That's providing Old Hoppy don't want to take us on a trip upcountry, I wouldn't put it past him."

William raised his eyebrows: his friend was whinging again but he could be right. "Praps he likes your company," he said.

"Well I'm fed up with his. I've seen enough of the back of his head to last me a lifetime." With that he pulled some food from his bag. "Wants some?" he asked.

The track snaked across the heathland, perhaps to avoid natural hazards or maybe just to follow the whim of the horse or the wild animals that once roamed there. It passed through a small copse and the canopy of branches made it dark and foreboding, like entering a tunnel. What light remained played tricks and William could make out shapes, phantoms and devils with arms held high, waiting to pounce. He was a countryman and accustomed to such sights but others were convinced they could pick out hundreds of goblins ready to pounce. There was something evil here, menacing, a good place for an ambush, they wanted to be back on open ground. Ahead of them was the cavalry of about 150 troopers and leading the long column, acting as the advance guard, were 150 mounted dragoons. William looked back at the straggle of infantrymen: he guessed that Richard was among them. Some were quiet, probably thinking of the battle ahead, but others were in good spirits, chatting, full of banter and laughter, buoyed up by the success at Windmill Hill. The heavy guns of the infantry trundled along somewhere in the middle and bringing up the rear was about 300 horse and dragoons. By 11.00pm they were on open ground within a few miles of Okehampton.

"Somebody ought to let Hoppy know it's time to stop," said Jabe.

"Well if you want to run up and have a word with him then I'll hold your musket," joked William.

"All I'm saying is we'll be joining them for supper if we don't stop soon. And talking of food..."

“My God,” said William, “you’ve got a throat on you like a bleddy shaft. I can’t understand how you’re so small.”

“There’s nothing wrong with being small,” quipped Jabe, “you’ve seen me fire my musket.”

“Yeah, once you’ve got it off the ground.”

Jabe didn’t answer. He plodded on trying to think of a response and in the darkness he tripped over a protruding root and almost fell.

“Hell, I thought you’d been shot,” said William. “You nearly went ass over tip. Anyway, this place you’re from, Penryn isn’t it?”

“Yeah, Penryn, don’t tell me you’ve never been there.”

“Well I bet you haven’t been where I live.”

“Hell, I’m talking about a town, not some pissing little place where nothing happens.”

“Well, what’s it like then?” William knew he shouldn’t have asked.

“Well for a start tis the largest town in Cornwall, well, just about. It’s bigger than Truro and being so close to the river it’s got everything going for it. There’s all these great houses, full of important people.”

“And they let you live there?” interrupted William.

Jabe ignored the comment. “Course, tis further south than you so it gets all the sun but I tell you what, the best thing is the women: all of them ready to give you a good time. See, there’s more of they so you can have a fresh one every other night and take a rest on Sunday – if you need it. Mind you, I never do...rest, that is. You ought to come down sometime.”

William looked bemused: he didn’t know which bits to believe and said, “Thanks, but I’ve got more than enough women in my life.”

“Is that right? Then that story I heard can’t be true.”

“What story was that?”

“About the water carrier. Good was she?”

William laughed, “Well she took my mind off the fighting.”

“Reminds me of a girl I once knew, she’d do anything you wanted.”

William smiled. Here we go again, he thought. He was beginning to pick his way through the half-truths and exaggerations. There was no malice in the man: he just loved to inflate every story.

“Hope we stop soon,” said Jabe.

William nodded, “I’m sure we will, we’ll need a few hours’ sleep before we lay into them. Trouble is, if I lie down, I won’t want to get up again. I’m bleddy knackered.”

He'd hardly finished talking when a shot rang out: it came from somewhere up ahead.

There were raucous shouts of "Careless bastard" but William was near the front and knew different. It was a signal. The next sound was the unmistakable pounding of hooves. "Jabe," he shouted, "we're under attack."

### **Chapter 33**

Chudleigh had been certain that Hopton would give chase and as he retreated, he'd posted lookouts on Sourton Down. He hoped he was wrong as his gun carriages and wagons had been sent to Crediton and he was left with just a small force to defend the town. To make matters worse he was not told of the approach until 9.00pm, when the Royalists were within a few miles. There was no time for discussion: he called his officers together for orders.

They set up barricades at the entrance of the town using whatever they could find. Then Chudleigh led his small cavalry out onto Sourton Down where he split them into six squadrons, each of 18 horse. They were told to find what cover they could and wait for his signal. It was a bold plan which depended on surprise.

They waited, praying that their mounts wouldn't give them away. They could hear the Royalists approaching, the commanders talking and laughing, oblivious to any danger. At the head were Sir Ralph Hopton, Lord Mohun, John Berkeley and Thomas Basset.

### **Chapter 34**

#### **The Battle of Sourton Down**

The signal shot echoed in the night sky and Captain Thomas Drake and his squadron galloped out of the darkness, firing blindly and shouting, "Fall on, fall on, they run, they run."

There were frantic shouts of, "Turn, turn," and the Royalist dragoons swung their horses around, back into the midst of their own infantry. Horses whinnied and reared and soldiers were knocked to the ground, many trampled in the scramble for safety. William fell but managed to get to his feet again. In the darkness it seemed as though there were thousands of them but the initial charge had been by just eighteen troopers. Within seconds the remainder of the ambush party dashed from their hiding places to join the attack.

William darted this way and that, trying to protect himself from the whirling horses: there was no time to think, no chance to escape. It was chaos and he couldn't tell friend from enemy. The Royalist infantry was in flight, scattered by its own troopers. Men were hacked to pieces by the enemy: they fell with cuts to their heads and bodies, ears sliced off and skulls split open. William tried to fight back but he was too busy avoiding the hooves of the retreating horses, twisting and turning in their midst. Still the enemy came on, out of the darkness, shouting, firing their carbines and slashing with their swords. William found Jabe on the floor with his arms wrapped around his head, he half carried, half dragged him to the cover of the furze: how could they fight an enemy they could hardly see?

The momentum took Chudleigh's troopers on and on until they reached the Royalist artillery and baggage wagons where many stopped. They'd inflicted terrible damage and their imperative should then have been to withdraw but their discipline broke. In spite of the danger of a counter-attack, they began looting.

Many Royalists had fled in terror but as it became clear that the attackers were few in number, Hopton shouted to stand and fight. William heard the shouts and stood up, he peered through the gloom, trying to make sense of what was happening, hoping to catch sight of Richard. The Royalists had been scattered but Mohun, Grenville and Slanning were now trying to get them into some sort of order. William rushed over to help the artillery manhandle a gun into position and to assemble a series of Swedish feathers in front of them to prevent a cavalry attack. He then ran back to join the others. "Will, over here," shouted Jabe, "I've saved you a front seat." Many were still convinced that a large force had attacked them – some were still running.

William and the other musketeers opened fire and very soon their pikemen arrived to give them cover from the enemy cavalry. Loading a musket in the dark is even more difficult than in daylight and William cursed as he struggled. He fired a shot in the general direction of the enemy and reloaded.

With the fight going their way, Chudleigh had sent a messenger back to Okehampton with an order that his infantry was to join the attack. His musketeers had rushed up and were now targeting the source of the enemy fire. The battle had taken on a new dimension but as the Royalist artillery joined the action, the advantage swung again. The gunners were using the glow of the enemy's match to pinpoint and bombard their positions.

By weight of numbers, the tide gradually swung in Hopton's favour and many of the Parliamentary infantry ran from the battle, heading back the way they'd come. Jabe thought it was a general retreat: he stood up and waved his arms.

"Get down you silly bugger," shouted William. He grabbed him and Jabe fell in a heap beside him. "It's just as well you're so bleddy short, otherwise you'd have lost your head."

Some of the Parliamentary musketeers were still firing but they knew that if they turned and ran, they would be cut to pieces by the enemy cavalry. Chudleigh ordered a retreat but it wasn't to be a mad scramble. The musketeers were to fix lighted match to the furze bushes and then quietly crawl away. They hoped to fool the Royalists into thinking they were still in position. The deception worked and while the Royalists waited for the next attack, Chudleigh's men made for Okehampton.

As the match finally burnt out, Hopton realised it was a ruse, he'd been fooled. He made sure that there was no further danger and stood down his men. The enemy had run away but his army was in no condition to give chase. Suddenly, as he assessed the damage, there was a loud rumble and many dived for cover, expecting another attack. But this barrage was from the sky, the prelude to a huge storm. For some, the more weak-minded, it was a troop of winged horsemen intent on wreaking more misery, to others it was Satan coming to destroy their God. To most it was simply a huge thunderstorm but within minutes it was directly overhead and enormous, stinging droplets fell like arrows. The deluge was so great that the ground quickly turned to mud. Huge thunderclaps rolled across Sourton Down and flashes of forked lightning lit up the grim battle scene. It struck at the soldiers again and again, each bolt the strength of a thousand cannon. It smacked into trees destroying mighty oaks that had stood for hundreds of years. It ploughed into the ground and sent shafts of power through the earth to topple men yards away: no one was safe. Powder bandoliers exploded and men rolled on the ground to escape the scalding pain. It was hellish and cries of terror accompanied every new flash. Men fell to their knees in prayer convinced that the defeat and the ferocious storm was a punishment from God. They were frantic to escape the stinging rain and Jabe darted for cover under a tree. William pulled him back: his years in the country had taught him it was no place to be. Minutes later the same tree exploded as a shaft of lightning drove into it. By the time the storm had passed, every man was wet through. The rain still fell but the lightning had ceased and the weary soldiers gathered their equipment.

Daylight exposed a pitiful scene: the debris of war lay strewn across Sourton Down. The baggage wagons were ripped to pieces, pikes and muskets lay where they'd been dropped and the dead where they'd fallen, like discarded bundles of old clothing.

They left the scene and headed for Bridestowe. The retreat was slow as the survivors helped drag the heavy artillery through the mud. Hopton understood how they felt but he'd no option but to drive them on. He'd lost many men: dead or injured. For some it had been too much, wet through and scared witless, they'd deserted. Others had been taken prisoner and Warwick Mohun himself had only just managed to escape. Despite being at the head of the column, the senior commanders were unharmed but others hadn't been so lucky. The battle had been bad enough but the storm had sapped their energy and destroyed their will. William shook his head, "It's terrible: I never thought it could be so bad. I can't find Richard anywhere." It would've eased his mind if he'd known his son was safe in Launceston.

Chudleigh had captured muskets, powder and 100 horses but it paled into insignificance compared to the taking of Hopton's portmanteau. It contained the muster rolls, a list of Royalist contributors and, of paramount importance, letters from the King outlining his strategic plans.

In complete contrast to the success at Windmill Hill, Sourton Down had been a humiliating defeat for Hopton. If he and his fellow commanders hadn't been so complacent it might have been avoided but they were up against General Chudleigh, a man of considerable military skill and tenacity.

## Chapter 35

Richard Ennor had slept well. He was unaware of the carnage and devastation just a few miles to the east.

"So what's a West Cornwall man doing fighting with us?" asked his young companion. "Didn't anyone else want you?"

Richard laughed as he anticipated his own joke. "Someone told me there was no one up here who could fight so I came up to show you how." Walter Smiley assured him it was appreciated. The battle at Braddock Down had turned them into firm friends.

"So why do you fight with us rather than a regiment from your own area?" asked Walter.

"My father wasn't happy but there was something about Sir Bevil that attracted me. I'd heard about him and when I saw him in Truro, I knew I wanted to serve under him. You can understand that, surely."

"Spose so," said Walter, "He's a fine man and a good landlord but we'd no choice, we had to join him. That was how he built his regiment so quickly. He's like that over most things. He's the Lord of the Manor and we have to do what we're told. We've no more say in what grist mills we use than who we'll fight for."

"And you resent that?" asked Richard. Walter didn't answer. "I mean, the way he led us at Braddock Down, it must have made you proud."

"For a man with little military training he did well. There's no doubting his bravery but the way he drives us, he'll have us all killed by the time this is over."

Richard was intrigued. "You say he made you join him, that sounds as though you wanted to fight for Parliament."

Walter looked around before answering. "I've got to be careful. I don't want a rope around my neck but I reckon I can trust you. Given a free choice, there's many here would support Parliament. At one time it seemed that Sir Bevil would be among them, he was so against the King. It was the war in Scotland that swung it for him, ever since then he's been loyal to Charles Stuart."

Richard frowned, "You're saying Grenville may have fought against the King?"

"Probably not, but in Parliament it was a different matter. When Sir John Eliot died in prison and the King wouldn't give up his body, well, you should've heard what Grenville said. It took him a while to get over it. Anyway, what about you, are you a King's man?"

It was Richard's turn to feel uneasy. He'd spoken to his father about his feelings but never to anyone else. Walter waited for a response and he could hardly refuse to answer. "I'm not," he said, "I've no love for him – or the church. I fear Charles Stuart will take us back to Catholicism."

"There's a lot I don't understand," said Walter, "but it seems to me that Cornwall once fought for the Pope and now it wants nothing to do with him."

"It wasn't just a fight for Popery," replied Richard. "My ancestors were involved in that rebellion and for them it was more than just being Catholic, it was for Cornwall, our language, our way of life. I don't want to fight for a foreign pope any more than I want to fight for this king. If it was just a case of who should rule, I'd fight for Parliament."

"Have a care Richard. That sort of talk would seem more fitting to the enemy camp but there are many who feel that way and would gladly switch sides but for Sir Bevil."

"You know Walter, my brother is for Parliament. He'll fight when he's old enough and I fear I may be pitched against him. I know many families greater than ours are split, the Bassets, the Carews, and probably others, but I love my brother better than any cause and I won't raise a hand against him."

"I can understand that but your father also fights for the King, is that because of Mohun?"

"My father is of a different age: he fights for the King because he loves the monarchy. He believes all that stuff about him being appointed by God with a divine right to rule and won't hear one word of criticism of him. He'd wipe the Royal ass if he was told to."

"Well, my dear Richard, we both find ourselves fighting for a distasteful cause, how can that be?"

Richard shrugged, "I think I can answer that, or at least I can give a reason that satisfies me. I don't know what feelings you have for Cornwall, you being from an area near the border and closer to the English way of life. Perhaps if I lived here, or certainly in Devon, then I may think differently but coming from where I do, Cornwall's everything to me. Its history, its fight for survival, its rebellions: it's all a part of my upbringing and the way I feel. This is one more battle in the struggle for our way of life, to show we're different. The King means nothing to me but I know Parliament will take all we have: it'll make us just like any other county. At least under the King we'll keep our identity. That's what I'm fighting for, can you understand it?"

Walter was taken aback by the passion in Richard's voice, "You should stand for Parliament when this lot's over, you'd have my vote, if I had one."

"So now you mock me."

“No Richard, I don’t mock you. I admire you for your beliefs and for your conviction. I believe we all have our reasons for fighting this war and while they may differ from man to man, we’re held together by a common cause. Perhaps I’d not even realised what it was till you spoke but now I do and I respect you the more for telling me.”

Richard paused, “I’ve never spoken of it outside my family, it’s a measure of our friendship that I do now.”

## Chapter 36

### To Stratton

The Royalist retreat from Bridestowe was a mournful affair, spirits were low and the conversation muted. It seemed that the good Lord had turned against them. The confidence gained at Braddock Down and at Launceston was lost and they were glad to be back in Cornwall.

William shook his head, “That was dreadful. We lost some good friends out there and the enemy must be greatly encouraged to come back at us.”

Jabe nodded, “I’ll bet the King let slip a few choice words: it won’t do Hoppy’s reputation much good.”

“Well,” said William, “he took the credit so now he must take the blame but I don’t think anyone would’ve thought that Chudleigh would’ve attacked the way he did. Pity he’s not on our side.”

Hopton kept his army in Launceston for a few days, to give the stragglers time to make it back. As soon as he thought them fit to travel, he set out for another raid on Tavistock. He occupied it for a while but when he heard that Stamford could be on his way, he returned to Launceston.

The Earl of Stamford had been boosted by the success at Sourton Downs and was determined to keep the pressure on the Cornish Army. From the King’s letters he knew that Hopton planned to advance into Somerset to join Prince Maurice, Prince Rupert’s brother. He had to prevent it and the best way was to take Cornwall. He ordered a rendezvous at Torrington. George Chudleigh, James Chudleigh’s father, moved north with his regiment from around Plymouth: he would be in command of the cavalry. Stamford’s Army was much larger than Hopton’s and he was in confident mood as he headed for Cornwall. Despite that, morale in the Royalist camp was surprisingly good. They’d fought a successful skirmish at Bude Bridge and Richard Prideaux had been busy in finding new recruits. Francis Basset too had been working hard raising the money to pay them.

The Royalists were spread along the border to protect the various crossings: Lord Mohun at Liskeard with 900 men including William Ennor and Jabe Retallack, Nicholas Slanning at Saltash with another 1,000, John Trevanion had 700 at Launceston and Bevil Grenville was at Stratton with his regiment of 1,200. Richard was pleased to have been relieved of garrison duty at Launceston.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May Hopton received news that the Earl of Stamford was marching towards north-east Cornwall. He sent orders to all his commanders: Saltash, Millbrook and Liskeard were to be garrisoned and the various river crossings lightly guarded. The remainder of the force were to join him at Stratton as soon as possible. It was about half the size of Stamford’s Army and to add to his problems, his food supply was low. The shortage would force him to engage the enemy as soon as possible.

Hopton led his army out of Launceston on the 13<sup>th</sup> May and by nightfall they were at North Petherwin, camped on the common. Jabe sat cross-legged on the ground: he looked like a pisky. “Chap over there

reckons we're short of food, there's enough for one biscuit each. How the hell is that going to keep us going?"

William frowned, "One biscuit!" Then he looked at Jabe and said, "Well I reckon you eat too much anyway. Sure you haven't got worms?" There was little laughter: no one liked an empty belly. The food allowance varied but it usually came down to what was available. If supplies were short then free quarter applied, food taken from local civilians, but in this scattered community there was little chance of finding much.

Jabe reached for his biscuit and looked at it. "It's going to be bleddy lonely down there," he said. William was at the latrine so Jabe took one for him as well. For a joke he nibbled it but by the time William returned he'd eaten almost half.

"Well, where's mine?" asked William.

"You've missed it. I thought you'd have collected yours on the way back."

"Bleddy marvellous," he said, "just one biscuit each and I don't even get that."

Jabe smiled, "Here, I can't see you go hungry, have half of mine."

"I can't do that, tis yours."

"No, no, here, have it." The grateful William took it and didn't even notice the sniggers from the other men.

Hopton was anxious for news of the recruitment drive at Bodmin. He hoped some of the early volunteers would be there in time for the coming battle. Stamford had found out about it and sent George Chudleigh and 1,200 horse to disrupt it. The loss of most of his cavalry weakened his force but a successful attack at Bodmin would disperse the Royalist recruits before they could become involved. Besides, it was probable that George Chudleigh would quickly deal with it and return to Stratton in time for the battle.

William went to find Richard. He was aware of suspicious looks from the men of Grenville's regiment: the shortage of food made them wary of his motives. He greeted him and they sat down to talk. "It's good to see you Richard. Fighting in different regiments keeps us apart and back there, at Sourton Down, I was afraid for you. See, I thought you'd marched with us. I spose it gives us different stories to tell."

"It does, but I'm sure yours was more exciting than mine. I heard of the bloodshed."

"Our own fault I fear. We were too confident, still enjoying the beating we'd given them the day before."

"My time in Launceston was boring," said Richard, "but I'd not have swapped it for what you went through. Now we're to face an enemy encouraged by its success."

"That's true but let's worry about that tomorrow, now we should enjoy the time we have together. Being so far from home I worry about things there: I hope the girls are well,"

"I'm sure they are," said Richard, "tucked away near the north coast."

"It's not just the war I was thinking of. It's your mother and the old woman. When I'm there I can have my say but they two are a force for evil." Richard didn't answer but the look on his face showed that he understood. "You must know your mother and I no longer like each other. I'd leave her if I could, especially now the old crone is there. If that's how your mother will end up then I want none of it."



Richard nodded, "I can't say I'm surprised. I've never known any tenderness between you, not even when we were young. Anyway, John will take care of the girls."

"He'll try but John is John and his interest is elsewhere." William paused, "I've never said this before Richard, I'd probably not say it now if it weren't for the coming battle, but I often think how different he is in looks and ways."

Richard didn't want to hear such talk. "I know you're not close, not as a father and son should be, but he's my brother and for all his faults I love him."

"Praps I'm hard on him but I promise you I love him. I never intend to treat him differently he just riles me so."

"You know Father, I sometimes envy him. He's so confident, especially with girls."

"But you've had your fun, I remember that little girl after the harvest, when I discovered you in the mowhay. She looked as though she was taking good care of you."

Richard laughed, "That's true enough, my first time."

"And what of your visits to the miner's widow, the one with the child, I thought you might end up there but it seemed to stop suddenly."

"There was a barrier that grew up between us. I was seeing her before Thomas died, while he was at work. It was fun: we both enjoyed the excitement – and the sex. When he died, we stopped seeing each other for a while and when I went back it was different, she was different. She talked of remorse and guilt: I didn't understand it then but I do now. I wish I could see her again, to say how sorry I am."

"I'm sure you'll have the chance. Maybe now the grief's faded she'll take you in her arms again."

"Father, I killed a man at Braddock, a young man. I watched him as I hammered my pike into his head. It was quick. I froze for a second or two, as the blood and gore spilt out. It was the realisation that I'd ended a life."

"I know how you felt my boy, but that's what war's about, if you stopped to think about the other person then 'twould be you lying there."

"But I wanted to go on and kill again. Somehow the beast in me took over."

William knew what he meant. "War has that effect on some: it makes them into good soldiers."

"But not into good people. That night I cried. I was sick and I cried. It's not in my nature to be so cruel but the thrill of the battle had taken over my mind. I wasn't proud of myself and thought of going home."

"But you didn't. Now, we must rest, it'll be a big day tomorrow. We should wish each other well and hope we'll talk again when the battle's over."

A blaze of yellow faced George Chudleigh's troopers as they crossed the border, the furze looked welcoming. They headed towards Bodmin and the Royalist muster, riding cautiously: aware they were in enemy territory.

William woke early. He'd not slept well and was hungry. Dreams of Ann had seemed so real. Jabe was already awake. "You alright? My God, you were some restless last night."

William yawned, "I was dreaming, battle nerves I spose."

Jabe was younger than William, by ten years or so. Despite the age difference, conversation was easy. "Did I tell you about my wife?" asked Jabe, and then, without waiting for an answer, he prattled on. "She kicked me out once, accused me of sleeping with her sister."

"And did you...sleep with her sister?"

"Like I told her, we didn't do much sleeping. Well, she was bleddy jumping. I had to move out for a while till she found she was pregnant and wanted me back. But then I worked it out and couldn't see how 'twas mine. I reckoned it was her way of getting back at me."

"Will you go back to her when this lot's over?"

"If I make it and can find her. Anyway, we'd better get moving, they're forming up."

After morning prayers the army marched away from North Petherwin, each man with his own thoughts. For Jabe it was the hunger in his belly. "What do you reckon to our chances this time? Sounds like they got a fair size army: and that Chudleigh fellow."

William pouched his lips. "We were up against it at Braddock and Launceston but we still made it. We beat them there and we can do it again with or without the Earl of bleddy Stamford."

"And Sourton Down," replied Jabe, "Don't forget Sourton Down." His jibe was interrupted by the sound of musket shot. Their advance force was under attack. Hopton sent a party of troopers to help but it was only a forward group of Parliamentary horse and dragoons and after a couple of hours they backed off. The losses were minimal but it had cost valuable time and by nightfall they'd only reached Week St Mary, still a few miles from Stratton. The regiments settled there but another incursion interrupted their rest and they had to stand guard all night.

"Fancy it do you?" Walter spotted Richard Ennor eyeing one of the female camp followers. He couldn't resist teasing him.

Richard laughed, "Obvious is it?"

"Tis but I hate to disappoint you."

"How's that then?"

"I think she's after me," replied Walter with a smile.

"You? nothing but a short-sighted dwarf would fancy you."

"Well then do something about it," laughed Walter. "Go and talk to her, that's what she wants. You might even get there before the battle."

“Trust you to bring it to that.” He was tempted but he said, “I’m tired, I’ll wait till tomorrow.”

They were still chatting and laughing when they heard the shouts. “Come on,” said Walter, “let’s see what’s on.”

Neither of them saw the slap but a girl was lying on the ground trying to shield her body. “It’s her,” shouted Walter, “your girlfriend.”

Standing over her was a soldier, a big man in Grenville colours. Richard recognised him and told him to leave her alone.

Without looking at him the soldier shouted, “Bugger off, tis none of your business.” He landed a kick and the girl cried out in pain.

Richard lunged at him. He spun him around and hit him while he was off balance. It was no more than a glancing blow but enough to send the man to the ground. Richard’s time spent breaking granite in the mine had built him into a powerful man. The soldier looked up, uncertain what to do.

Walter shouted, “Stay there, he’ll only do it again.” As Richard turned to enjoy the laughter the man sprang to his feet, knife in hand. He waved it at Richard. “Come on then, try it again.”

Richard hesitated: in a fair fight he could take him but with the knife he wasn’t so sure. Suddenly the weapon was spinning to the ground. One of the officers had heard the shouting and decided to investigate. He brought the flat of his sword down on the soldier’s wrist. There was a shout of pain and a small streak of blood ran down his hand. “If you want to fight, then you’ll fight fair,” he shouted, “if you touch that knife, I’ll cut off your arm.” Then, looking around he shouted, “Get back and give them space.”

Still rubbing his hand, the soldier looked at Richard. He raised his fists but he was less sure now. Richard was a few inches taller and bigger in build, he moved towards him. The next blow caught the soldier in his midriff and as he doubled over, an uppercut took him off his feet. He crashed back to the ground and it was all over.

“Right,” shouted the officer, “that’s enough. It was a fair fight and that’s the end of it. Now get up and shake hands.” Richard held out his hand to pull the man to his feet but he wanted no help. He struggled up and turned away.

“I said, shake hands,” shouted the officer.

Grudgingly the hands touched and as he walked away the man whispered, “Watch your back, Ennor.”

Richard shrugged. He looked around but the girl had gone. As they walked away Walter slapped him on his back. “Remind me never to argue with you.”

“Walter,” he said, “I heard them call her a camp bitch. Is she a whore?”

“I thought you knew. She tends the sick but she also earns a trifle for her favours.”

Richard was quiet for a while, he was thinking. “You mean I’ve just risked my life for a whore?”

“You have Richard, you have.”

## Chapter 38

### The Battle of Stratton

The next day, the 15<sup>th</sup> May, William woke with a headache. He'd been dreaming again. Joan and the old woman had been sharing out his possessions, as if he was dead. It was a terrible foreboding, a warning that he may not make it through the coming battle. The previous night had been different: Ann had appeared so vivid, so real. He lay there, staring at the sky and thinking of her, of how lucky he'd been to find her. She was both his lover and soul mate.

William had worked with her husband down the mine. He'd helped dig him out when he'd been trapped by a rock fall. His legs had been crushed. William had taken him home on a cart but he'd died before they'd reached the cottage. Telling Ann had been dreadful. It was the first time that they'd met and he still remembered how distraught she'd been. Perhaps the shared grief had thrown them together but after that he called occasionally to make sure she was coping.

Sir Ralph Hopton now understood the Cornish a little better but they frustrated him. There were none better in battle but after the action they became rebellious. Their temperament was unlike any other men he'd commanded, almost like a different race. He was a professional soldier and used to the casualties of war but it would be a much harder man than him who didn't worry about the inevitable losses in the coming battle. He knew the challenge: if he lost then it would be his first defeat on Cornish soil. He tried to dispel such negative thoughts: the enemy was drawing nearer and he had letters to write.

William Ennor was an ordinary soldier but when he spoke, the others listened. Perhaps it was his age but most probably it was his wise head. "I know one thing," he said, "Hopton's a good commander, he supports and rewards us as best he can and he's got my respect." He'd spoken to him once, not in conversation, just a few words. "He's alright," he told Jabe, "just as long as you do what he tells you. I reckon he sees us as an unruly bunch but good fighters in a tight corner."

Jabe nodded. "Like at Sourton Down you mean."

"Yeah, that was a disaster and praps it was his fault but he's the best we've got and if anyone can get us through this, it's him."

Jabe nodded again, "You're right. I reckon his grandfather must have been Cornish."

William aimed a playful swing at his head.

The Earl of Stamford's Army had left Holsworthy and headed for Stratton with 5,400 foot, 200 horse and 13 heavy guns. Sir John Northcote's Devon Regiment and Merrick's Greycoats were among them: it was they who'd helped save the day at Launceston. He arrived ahead of the Royalists and took up position on the summit of the hill overlooking the town. But for his encounters on route, Hopton may have arrived early enough to claim the position.

While the Parliamentary defences were being set up, Stamford surveyed the countryside. He knew the attack would come from the south and west where the ground sloped up towards him. The hedges near the bottom would provide good cover for his forward musketeers. To the east was a sheer drop into a valley, it was too steep for an attack and densely wooded. At the bottom was the River Neet. He positioned his artillery in a sweep from north to south.

By the evening, the Royalist Army was at Efford House, on the outskirts of Stratton, an area familiar to Sir Bevil Grenville whose home was at Stowe, just a few miles to the north. There was an immediate skirmish but the Royalists managed to drive off the enemy and seize the pass over the river at Efford Mill.

Apart from the positional disadvantage the Cornish were tired, hungry and short of ammunition. Not ideal conditions for a battle. Hopton set up his headquarters in the manor house and called for a Council of War.

They would attack as early as possible, before George Chudleigh could return from Bodmin. Once again, there was only one biscuit for each man.

“Hell, tid’n enough to fight on,” grumbled Jabe.

William snapped back, “You’re always bleddy hungry and if you think I’m going to share mine after your last trick then you can think again.”

Jabe looked sheepish, someone had split on him.

Apart from the lack of food, the Royalists were short of powder but Hopton insisted that the men wouldn’t be told. The last thing he wanted was desertions. He knew it was unlikely that Stamford would move off the hill but just in case, he posted guards to take care of any raiding parties.

William and Jabe lay side by side, watching the darkening shape of the hill. As the light faded it played tricks with their eyes and every bush seemed to conceal enemy soldiers. A sudden movement had Jabe aiming his musket but William held up his hand. “Steady Boy, it’s a rabbit, the little buggers are everywhere.” As the night wore on, they struggled to stay awake and both looked forward to the end of their watch. “Here Jabe, I was talking to this fellow a few days ago and he reckoned your story about Penryn was a bit far-fetched. He said it wasn’t much of a place and reckoned the sailors call it shag town. Now, what sort of name’s that?” Unfortunately Jabe didn’t hear his goading: he was asleep.

At first light the Royalists spotted some Parliamentary soldiers not far from their lines and they sent off a few shots. “An early morning wake-up call,” as Jabe put it. The fire was returned but there were no casualties on either side. William could see the enemy on the summit. He knew this was a battle that had to be fought but it didn’t look good.

Hopton had divided his army into five divisions. Four comprised 600 infantry and two light guns, the fifth had 500 horse and dragoons and was commanded by Sir John Digby. He was over to the west, to guard against George Chudleigh’s horse should they return. The River Neet covered the Royalist right flank whilst their left lay towards the coast and Digby’s horse. Stamford had no ammunition problems, plenty of food and positioned where he was, he would be able to soak up the Royalist attacks until Chudleigh returned to finish them off.

At 5.00am Sir Ralph Hopton gave the signal for the first assault and the four infantry columns began to move uphill against heavy defending musket and cannon fire. Richard Ennor looked up at the long slope of the hill, at the musketeers and at the Parliamentary artillery spread out at the summit. We won’t make it this time, he thought, not against that lot.

Grenville’s and Berkeley’s musketeers approached from the southwest. Richard and the other pikemen were in narrow columns in the lanes with musketeers on each side. To their right, attacking from the south, were Mohun’s and Hopton’s regiments. Richard knew his father was with them and prayed that he would survive. Approaching from the west were William Godolphin and Thomas Basset, now a Major General of Hopton’s foot, and beyond them were the combined forces of Nicholas Slanning and Colonel Trevanion. John Digby guarded the road from the northwest to prevent any flanking movement.

The Cornish charged up the steep slope but the enemy's artillery fire and superior numbers forced them back time after time. Some managed to find cover on the hill but others turned and ran for safety. The action continued throughout the day and by 3.00pm the Royalists were exhausted.

"Tis hopeless," shouted Richard, "we'll never get them off this bleddy hill. There's too many of them." It was not only Richard who despaired. Hopton too, was beginning to lose heart and to make matters worse they were almost out of powder. He knew that if the soldiers found out, they would run: their instinct would be to head for home to protect their families. Hopton signalled his commanders to hold their position: despite the shortage of powder they would make one final charge. It was to be with pike and sword: no shots were to be fired until they reached the top.

Richard glanced at Walter, "That can't be right," he said. "We'll all be killed." There was no chance to argue and he breathed hard and gripped his pike. So far, the pikemen had been less involved but now they would lead the attack. Speed was important and Grenville's regiment raced up the slope, ahead of the others, shouting and screaming as they ran. Lead shot rained down on them but still they charged, like wild animals chasing their prey. Some bullets found a target but many were fired in panic and the Parliamentarian musketeers recoiled at the onslaught. James Chudleigh saw the danger and counter-attacked. His pikemen drove at the Royalists, forcing them back. Bevil Grenville was knocked to the ground and in danger of being crushed underfoot but his men had seen him. They dragged him to his feet. He was shaken but soon back in action. Gradually, Chudleigh's counter began to crumble and as John Berkeley drove into his flank, he found himself fighting on two fronts. Grenville's pike were back on top again, driving forward, overrunning Chudleigh's men. The counter had been a brave action but it had been thwarted and most of the enemy pikemen killed. Chudleigh held up his arms in surrender.

Despite having all the advantages, Stamford was now desperately trying to hold on as the four Royalist divisions pushed towards the summit, swinging their muskets like clubs as soon as they were close enough. Sensing victory, they surged forward and as the defenders moved back, they took their place on the plateau near the top. It was now 4.00pm and the Parliamentarians were near to collapse. Stamford and John Weare ordered one last stand but only 30 men remained with them. There was little they could do. The Parliamentary Army had dramatically collapsed and 3,000 men had run from the scene. Stamford's artillery barked out one last defiant salvo before it was overrun and the guns turned and used against the fleeing soldiers.

William was breathless but managed to shout, "I can't believe it, we won. They had everything going for them and we beat the buggers." Just like the other battles on Cornish soil, the skill and bravery of the Cornish pikeman had brought about an unlikely win. The big guns fell silent but the acrid smell of gunpowder still hung in the air.

Later that evening Hopton led a solemn thanksgiving for the victory and declared that God had blessed the King's party. "Bollocks," said Jabe, "I don't begrudge sharing the credit with Hopton but it was us Cornish that did it." Most agreed with him, fighting for your homeland is a powerful spur.

Stamford was devastated, the Greycoats and volunteers had fought well but he declared the rest, "Base, cow-hearted cowards."

The Cornish Army was exhausted. A few wanted to chase after Stamford but Hopton decided against it. They occupied the hilltop camp and scoffed Parliamentarian food. "I'll say one thing," said William, "these rebels live well."

Jabe grunted: he was busy chewing. "Funny thing that, you calling them rebels, that's just what they call us."

After he'd eaten, William wandered over to Grenville's camp to find Richard. He asked around but could make no sense of the replies. Someone called out, "He's probably with his whore: he must be there by now." William laughed and strolled back to his own unit.

Hopton slept well. He awoke and began checking the numbers: 300 enemy dead and 1,700 prisoners including 30 officers. In the frantic escape they'd abandoned 13 cannon, one mortar and all the baggage. Despite the suicidal uphill attack the Royalists had lost less than 100 men. William was worried that Richard may be among them. If not, then where the hell was he?

"I hate this," said William, "it's like robbing the dead." They were removing valuables and clothing from the bodies.

"No point in leaving it Will, 'Tid'n no good to they."

Local men were employed to dig a large hole and as soon as it was finished, the dead were thrown in with little or no ceremony. Many families would be left to wonder if or where their loved ones had died.

"I hope they're all dead," said William.

Jabe was less concerned, "Well if they aren't they soon will be."

James Chudleigh had led a brave counter-attack but failure brings recrimination and Stamford needed a scapegoat. He was blamed for the collapse and was now a prisoner and in no position to defend his name.

It was an amazing victory and as the news spread across the country, the stories of the Cornish Army's invincibility grew. To the King, it became the army that could win the war for him. To Parliament there was only despair, nothing now could stop the Cornish on their march to the east.

### Chapter 39

Richard Ennor hadn't been with the girl: he'd been badly injured and now lay on a bed, close to death. Two shots had slammed into his body, one had passed through his arm muscle and the other remained lodged in his chest. Walter, and the girl he'd defended, had tended him where he fell and then carried him to the nearest cottage where the farmer and his wife had agreed to care for him. He was in a bad state but conscious. Despite his injuries he asked to see the girl.

"She's outside," said Walter, "but you're in no state to entertain her."

Richard smiled, "I just want to see her."

As Walter moved to the door he turned, "Richard, we won, against all the odds, we beat them."

Richard smiled, "I know. Go back to the celebrations. I pray we'll meet again." Even before the girl reached his bedside, he was asleep.

William continued his search for Richard. He was sure he wasn't among the dead and began to suspect that he'd deserted. It wasn't something he wanted to believe. "Praps the girl turned his head," he said.

“Praps she did,” replied Jabe. He could see the concern on William’s face and tried to lighten his mood. “I wouldn’t blame him: I could do with a bit of comfort myself. It’s so long since I had my way with a wench that I aren’t sure I remember what to do.”

“I’m sure you will,” said William.

“Well I hope tis soon, I’m even finding you attractive.”

William managed a laugh but he was worried. “I can’t believe he’d desert,” he said, “I just can’t.”

As the army prepared to leave, Walter went to see Richard again, this time to say goodbye. The girl went with him. He was worse, drifting in and out of consciousness, and Walter feared that he wouldn’t survive for long. He bent over him and whispered, “Richard, can you hear me? We have to go.” He doubted that he understood. He shook his head and mouthed, “May God be with you.”

The farmer’s wife was standing outside the bedroom door. Walter shook his head and said, “Here, it’s all I have. Take good care of him, I fear the end won’t be long.”

They both had eyes full of tears but she forced a reply. “My husband wouldn’t hear of taking your money, you leave him to us and we’ll do all that’s right and proper.”

Walter waited while the girl said goodbye and then they made their way back towards the camp. As they tramped across the field she said, “Do you think he’ll survive?”

“I fear not,” said Walter, “the bullet will reach his heart or gangrene will set in, either way he’s lost to us.”

She stopped walking and looked back at the farmhouse. “I aren’t going,” she said.

Walter turned towards her. “What then?” He already knew the answer.

“He saved my life and now I’ve got to try and save his. If the woman agrees then I’ll nurse him.”

Walter held her hand and kissed her on the forehead. “I’ll tell the others.”

The girl picked her way through the mud and animal muck in the yard: she was shaking when she knocked on the door. “I...I want to stay...to look after him. I can sleep in his room, help with the farm, anything. Please say yes.”

The older woman hesitated, wondering what her husband would say. Then she smiled, “Of course you can, we’ll be glad of your company.”

Hopton rested his army for a day and then made off towards Launceston to try and intercept George Chudleigh on his return from Bodmin. Old Mr Kendall, the Mayor of Lostwithiel, had led the defence there and been killed in the action. Chudleigh managed to avoid the Royalists and when he arrived at Plymouth he found the town in panic. Rumour was rife and the gossip in the market place was of little else. It was unbelievable that such a large Parliamentary force could’ve been defeated. He went to report to Sir Alexander Carew, about the defeat – and of his son’s defection to the King’s cause. Only a few weeks later Sir George Chudleigh followed his son into the Royalist ranks.

The people of Plymouth prepared for the attack which they knew must come. The town had sent many men to fight at Stratton and would now be a much softer target. The townsfolk had helped build new a line of forts and redoubts. They would soon be tested.



The importance of the Royalist victory at Stratton was immense. Many Devonians no longer believed Parliament could win the war. Some withdrew from the action while others switched sides like weathercocks in the wind.

## Chapter 40

“Good day to you Mrs Ennor, would young John be here?”

Joan was cautious. “Who wants him?”

“My name’s Tregonning, you may remember that I called with Mr Treleigh a while back.”

“I remember. Did he not contact you? I told him to.”

“He did. He came to Churchtown and we had a very interesting talk. Now I want to see him again.”

“Well he’s out in the fields somewhere, probably down by the river, near the mill.”

“I’m obliged Mrs Ennor, thank you for your time.”

Tregonning turned his horse and headed off down the old track by the manor house. The hamlet was deserted. At the bottom of the hill he turned left onto the narrow pathway beside the water leat and within a few yards he spotted John working in the steep field. The boy looked up as he approached.

“John Ennor, I’ve come to see you, just like I said I would.”

John stopped work and walked towards him. Tregonning dismounted and sat on an old tree stump, next to the leat. “What a pleasant spot for a chat.”

“So what do you want of me?”

“Now now, why the aggression? We’re here to help each other. Mr Treleigh can be a good friend or a powerful enemy, it’s your choice. He wants me to tell you he still awaits delivery of the book, either that or some names. Oh, and just in case you need reminding, Mr Treleigh said to send his regards to your sister. I caught sight of her earlier, fine girl, fine figure.”

John felt his hackles rise. He loved both his sisters but Catherine was special.

“Now, I’ve two jobs for you. Carry them out and you’ll be rewarded. Fail...I don’t have to explain, do I?” John didn’t respond. “Mr Treleigh’s being troubled by a particularly awkward tenant at Pasco’s Farm, he refuses to pay his rent till his grievances are sorted. Well you know what an honourable man Mr Treleigh is, his tenant is a troublemaker and needs to be sorted. We need your help to persuade him that co-operation is the best course.”

“Why can’t you do it?”

“Me? But it’s your job. Oh, I forgot to say, should things get nasty then you’re welcome to deal with him as we did the priest but if you’re caught, we’ll deny any involvement.”

John nodded, "And the other job?"

Tregonning smiled, "I'm glad you didn't let me forget," he said mockingly. "Mr Treleigh wants you to keep an eye on someone, nothing more than that for the moment. It's a man who might not be acting in the best interests of the King and considering your history he may be known to you, from when you were a visitor to the priest."

"And his name?"

"His name is Thomas Prowse, a friend of yours perhaps."

"Not especially, but even so I don't like it. I don't like either job."

"Ah, that's the way of it, if only we could choose our destiny. Now don't forget, Mr Treleigh's expecting delivery of that book and his patience has been sorely tested."

"I've already told you that I don't have it and that's the truth."

"And you're a liar, a bare-faced liar. Now get to your work, I expect to hear from you shortly."

Tregonning heaved his bulky frame onto the horse and rode back up the lane. Thomas Prowse! He would check the book.

## Chapter 41

### From Stratton to Lansdown

The road across Devon was open and the Cornish Army headed east to play its part on a bigger stage. William was leaving his homeland again. He looked back and feared it may be for some time. He prayed that he would live to return.

The Cornish defences had been strengthened and the Tamar was a secure border once more. Where there had once been a reluctance to fight outside Cornwall, on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1643, with morale high, Sir Ralph Hopton led his army of almost 4,000 men towards Okehampton. Bevil Grenville followed after he'd attended to the prisoners at Stratton. James Chudleigh was now a member of the Royalist Army. Despite the accusations at Stratton, he was a good commander and a considerable loss to Parliament. Hopton encountered no opposition at Okehampton and his army rested there for a few days.

Walter had tried to find William at Stratton. He knew he served in Lord Mohun's regiment and wandered over to a man who resembled Richard. "Would you be Richard Adam's father?" asked Walter.

William looked up. "I am, have you news of him?"

"I have, but not good I'm afraid. He was badly injured at Stratton. I took him to a cottage and one of the camp followers stayed to tend him. He'd been hit by two musket-shot: one was still in his chest. I'm afraid he stood little chance of surviving and by now..." His voice trailed off.

William nodded and cursed himself for suspecting he'd deserted. "I somehow knew I wouldn't see him again, thank you for what you did."

There was no banter from Jabe that day: he shared in William's grief. "Will, I'm sorry, tis a terrible thing to lose a son. It should never happen to anyone." William tried to respond but couldn't.

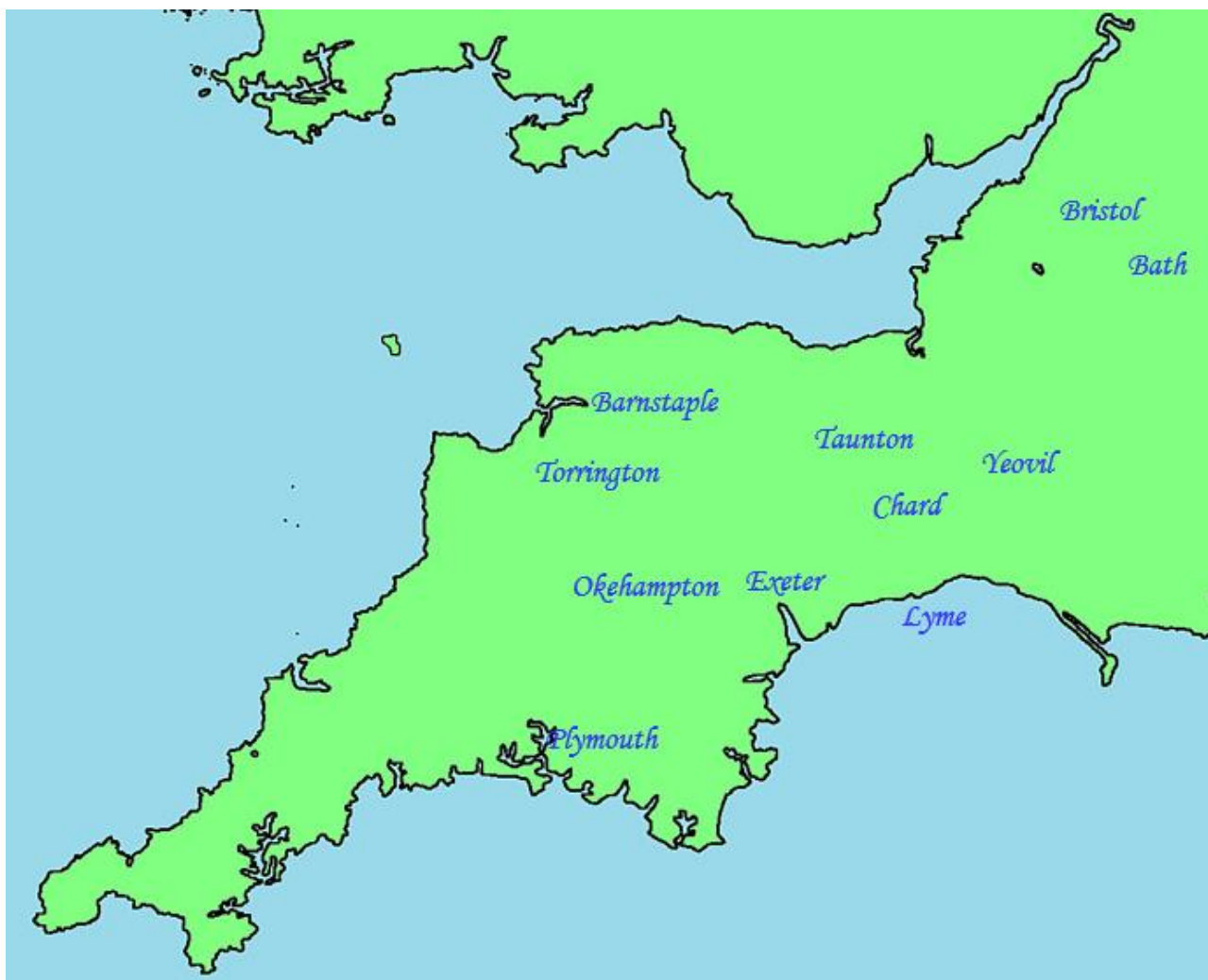
The Cornish soldiers had gained an almost legendary reputation in the defence of their homeland and when Grenville rejoined them, they broke camp and marched to Crediton.

Plymouth, the most westerly of Parliament's possessions, was safe for the moment. The town had taken full advantage of the lull in activity outside its walls: the defences were now formidable and confidence began to return. Life continued much as it would in any large town but relief was short-lived – Royalist Colonel John Digby was on its doorstep, camped at Plymstock.

At the end of May, Hopton threatened Exeter but as before, the mayor refused to yield. Hopton's orders were to combine his army with the Earl of Hertford: he couldn't afford to waste time on a siege. He left Major John Berkeley to mount a blockade.

Colonel John Weare was camped at Tiverton but unwilling to face the might of the Cornish Army. He scampered away and Hopton led his army into the town. After a few days rest they moved to Cullompton and then on to Honiton which fell after a brief skirmish. Axminster was next and while he was there, Hopton received news that the Marquis of Hertford and Prince Maurice were at Yeovil.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June the armies combined at Chard, a total force of about 6,500.



Southwest Locations Mentioned

Prince Maurice was a son of Elizabeth, the King of England's sister. He and his elder brother had agreed to fight for their uncle and was placed at the head of the cavalry in the Marquis of Hertford's Army. He made no secret that he wanted to replace him as commander of the Western Army.

William eyed his new colleagues with suspicion: there were so many accents. "I can't tell what half of them are on about," he said, "and the rest are less than pleasant." Following Stratton, the reputation of the Cornish had spread but here they were shown little respect. The English soldiers talked about them not knowing or caring if they understood. William tried to ignore it but the jibes annoyed him and one comment about the Cornish Army of yokels dragged from the mines left him struggling to control his temper.

Ralph Hopton had brought his five regiments, about 3,000 infantry and 1,000 horse. It was about two-thirds of the total but despite having the larger force, he and his officers had to drop in rank to accommodate the Marquis of Hertford, the supreme commander in the South West, and Prince Maurice. Hopton became a field marshal under Hertford and his five regimental commanders were placed under Joseph Wagstaffe, Hertford's major general. Hopton's men weren't impressed. There were many comments and William summed it up, "Sir Ralph may be happy about it but I aren't. It shows what they think of we Cornish. Anyway, they can call it the Western Army if they like but for us tis still the Cornish Army."

Hopton was a man of high ideals, devoutly religious with beliefs not unlike the Puritans. He wouldn't tolerate plundering and bad behaviour in his army and was quick to punish any man who broke his rules. The merging of his troops into a larger force was a test of his patience. The standard of discipline and piety in the ranks of those he now joined fell far below what he demanded of his own men and he was concerned that their lack of discipline would spread. Prince Maurice had little consideration for civilians and he and the Marquis of Hertford allowed their troops to plunder freely. Hopton was sickened by it. After all, they were in Somerset, his own county.

The King was delighted. Apart from Plymouth, Exeter and a few lesser towns, the South-West was in Royalist hands. Wales and the north were solid in their support for him and the Parliamentary forces were demoralised and largely stagnant. At sea, Parliament controlled the navy but despite that, Royalist ships still managed to land provisions.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June the combined Royalist Army of the West left Chard and advanced to within two miles of Taunton. The same day the Queen left York on her march to join the King at Oxford taking with her much needed reinforcements.

The battle scene was now far from the Cornish border and William worried that few men had been left to guard it. "Just suppose," he said to Jabe, "they send a force down from Plymouth, to attack Cornwall. While we're gadding about up here, they could make a bleddy mess of it."

"You're a real worrier. What the hell do you want me to do about it, nip back to check everything's alright?"

"Well it could happen," continued William.

"Well there's the garrisons and Digby's got Plymouth pinned down. I don't know what you're fussing about."

William was unconvinced. "It's alright for you but I got two daughters down there."

Jabe rolled his eyes. "They'll be alright. Save your worrying for us."

One of the other soldiers joined in the conversation. "I wouldn't worry about it, I heard that there was a bit of panic when they made a raid but they were soon thrown out."

"There you are, I bleddy knew it. We're stretched too far."

The soldier laughed, "You needn't worry, they didn't get passed Saltash."

As they approached Taunton there was jeering from the front ranks: two men had come out from the town with a request to treat. No agreement was reached and as the Cornish Army advanced, the Parliamentarians left. Before long, Bridgewater, Dunster Castle and Wells all fell and ahead lay the ancient city of Bath. Beyond that, Bristol itself. Glastonbury fell next and produced a healthy haul of Parliamentary heavy guns. "We've got them running," William shouted. "It'll soon be over."

Jabe was less confident, "Maybe," he said, "but just remember, they've kicked our ass before."

"Can't see it happening," said William.

But Jabe was right. At nearby Bath, Sir William Waller refused to withdraw, he'd decided to stand and fight. Few believed he stood much chance but he was a good soldier and when the attack came, he had the better of it. He recaptured the artillery lost at Glastonbury and the Royalists pulled back to Wells where they remained for about two weeks, licking their wounds.

Hopton and William Waller had fought together on the continent and were good friends but now they were in opposite camps. Hopton invited him to meet and it was with a heavy heart that Waller penned a poignant letter of refusal.

Waller needed more men and supplies and he sent an urgent request to Nathaniel Fiennes at Bristol. He told him that failure to stop the Royalist push would leave them all in danger. Parliament was aware of his situation and sent Arthur Haselrig and his cavalry to join him but despite this, they still faced a larger army. He marched out of Bath, set up a defensive formation and waited.

The battle began with a few skirmishes, each side testing the other and when the main attack came, it was fierce. The Royalists charged again and again and eventually Waller had no choice but to withdraw. He retreated into Bath where he paused to plan his next move.

Lansdown Hill is a commanding ridge not far from Bath, a good defensive position for any army. "I've heard that's where we're headed," said Jabe, "Ralphy Boy couldn't make up his mind so I told him it's where we ought to be. They won't stand a chance if we're up there."

William chuckled. "Been there before, have you? I mean, you seem to know all about it."

It was early on the 4<sup>th</sup> July when the Royalists broke camp and marched away. They were in good spirits and as they approached the hill, they could see why it had been chosen. "Well done, 'General' Retallack," joked William, "Hopton must be pleased. An army perched up there is going to take some shifting."

Almost immediately the order to halt rang out and a voice from near the front shouted, "The bastards have beaten us to it."

As they looked up, they could see the enemy's large guns already in position. "Bleddy hell," said William, "we're too late."

Jabe shielded his mouth with his hand and whispered, "Look at Hertford's face? He's hellish. He knows we should've got there first." Word had got out that the Royalists had spurned the opportunity to occupy it a few days before.

Prince Maurice called the Royalist officers together, a short distance away from the soldiers. "Here Jabe, I reckon you should be over there," joked William.

Jabe ignored the jibe. "Always one scat behind, that's us. I hope they're not thinking of going on, we'll be cut to pieces before we're half way up the first bleddy slope."

"Well, we can't stay here, not with they great guns looking down at us. We gotta pull back."

They didn't have long to wait. Hertford posted musketeers to cover the retreat and withdrew his army, all the way back to Marshfield. After they'd set up camp, Jabe lay down for a snooze. "Better not make yourself too comfortable," said William, "we won't be here for long." He was right but even an overnight stop provided the opportunity to catch up on the small but essential tasks of army life: casting musket shot, dressing wounds and repairing equipment. The soldiers sat in groups, cleaning their muskets and cursing their luck. The camp followers cooked a meal, the same ones who helped the wounded and carried the water. Some of the females were soldiers' wives or lovers and every army had its share of whores, ready to offer their services. Some had been whipped and driven from the camp but most commanders tolerated them providing they also worked. Life for the camp followers was as hard as for the soldiers, more so when food was in short supply.

Suddenly a shout rang out, "Fight, fight."

William stood up to see what was happening. "Bleddy kids," he said, "probably gambling or else two blokes chasing the same woman." There was no officer nearby and a large group had gathered.

"I'm off to watch," shouted Jabe, "coming are you?"

William thought about it and then said, "Yeah, I spose so. You won't be able to see unless I lift you up."

It was early morning when the order came to break camp. They marched away towards Tog Hill, just north of Waller's position. Immediately they arrived they set up their defences, in case of an attack. It was not as high as Lansdown and William shook his head, "I'd gladly swop, he said. Look at the cover they've got." He was right, Waller's artillery was aimed at every angle of approach and his musketeers were spread out across the slopes, threatening anyone foolish enough to attack.

Jabe watched as the Royalist officers conferred. "Now what," he muttered, "if they tell us to attack then I'm off home."

"Come on," said William, "give them some credit. There's no need to attack."

"Well I can't see Waller wanting to," said Jabe. "Why the hell would he?"

"Well in that case we'll just sit here and starve them off the mountain."

It was clear that neither side wanted to make the first move. A few hours passed with nothing more than shouts of abuse and the occasional musket shot. William was restless, the way he always was before an action. He looked at Jabe, "You alright?"

"Yeah, apart from my guts. If this goes on for long then I'll need a bush."

As they waited, instructions began to be issued to the junior officers and William was convinced that it was bad news. "My God," he said, "we're going to attack." Fear gripped them as memories of Stratton flooded back but when the drums beat the order, it was to retreat. The Royalist commanders had decided to break camp and march away. They would fight another day, on more even terms.

The jeers from Lansdown Hill rang in William's ears. "They can shout as much as they like," he said, "we'll get the buggers next time."

But Waller had other ideas. He held a good position and wanted to draw the Royalists into a fight but now he saw his chance slipping away. Hoof beats drowned the sound of jeering and as William looked back, he saw a huge body of horse thundering down the hill. Waller had sent 1,000 horse and dragoons to attack their rear. They were determined to cut the Royalists to pieces before they could get away.

The sight and sound of the charge was terrifying. The Royalist horse at the rear of the column scattered leaving the infantry unprotected. The enemy cavalry raced towards them. William glanced over his shoulder: soon they would hear the swish of swords. It would be a rout. "For Christ's sake run," he shouted but that was not the order that rang out. Turn and face the enemy was the signal, they were to fight rather than be cut down from behind. The pikemen had practised for just such a situation and without any order. they dug their weapons into the ground, placed one foot behind them and lowered the business end to meet the oncoming cavalry. Too late, the riders tried to veer away but the pressure from behind forced them on. As the horses were impaled their riders were despatched by musket or sword. Still they surged forward but the Royalist pike held firm and suddenly it was the Parliamentary cavalry that was in danger of being decimated. Volley after volley slammed into the writhing group until what was left, turned and raced back towards their lines.

Shouting and screaming, the Cornish foot set off in pursuit. The pikemen, supported by the cavalry and musketeers, charged across the level ground. William struggled to keep up, most were younger than him but he was doing his best. As they reached the lower slopes, Bevil Grenville shouted the order to charge up the hill, they had to silence the enemy's guns. The cannons roared out their message from the summit and lead shot screamed down onto them but the momentum was now with the Royalists and as they surged forward, Waller's musketeers on the lower slopes ran from cover and back up the hill. The Cornish infantry had shown what was possible and the remainder of the Royalist Army now joined the attack. The barrage of artillery and musket fire from the top of the hill was hellish and the Royalists were forced to take cover behind the hedges that had previously shielded the enemy. The smoke made it difficult to see more than a few yards but they pressed on, fighting their way up the slope. Bodies lay strewn across the ground and the wounded screamed for help. It was carnage and few thought that they would reach the top unscathed. William sheltered behind a hedge, his hands shaking as he tried to reload. He fired a shot in the general direction of the enemy and hoped it would find a target. The bank ahead would be his next objective and he shouted to Jabe to move forward. There was no response. He could see him through the smoke but he was not moving. He called again. Nothing. He darted across the open space and knelt beside him. Jabe looked straight ahead, his eyes staring, unseeing. It was as if he was dead but he was not. William had seen it before, in a prisoner who was about to be hanged: the mind had ceased to function, no longer in control of the body. He shouted at him, "Jabe, come on."

There was no reaction. William shook him and as Jabe turned he saw the eyes of a young boy: imploring, pleading. "I can't go on."

William squeezed his shoulder. "Jabe, you've got to, if the Captain sees you like this he'll have you shot. Now come on and we'll go together, up to that mound. Reload before we move." Jabe did not.

“Right, now,” shouted William and half dragged him towards the next line of cover. From up ahead he could hear their pikemen shouting, it was enough to put the fear of God into him let alone the enemy. Through the gaps in the smoke he could see Bevil Grenville, urging them on. Anthony Payne carried the colours: his giant frame, head and shoulders above the rest. “My God,” murmured William, “it’s just like Stratton.” Jabe didn’t react, he was fighting his own battle but his was inside his head. “Come on,” shouted William, “we’ve gotta move forward again.” His friend was on his feet but shaking too much to respond.

The Parliamentary infantry was on the high ground but they were being forced back by the pressure of Grenville’s pike. They were now less secure under the continuous onslaught and with one huge push the Cornish pike scrambled onto the plateau. The fight was now on level ground. Time and again Waller’s forces countered and it seemed that the exhausted Cornishmen would be driven over the edge and back down the hill. Ahead of them the big guns still roared and smoke covered the hillside, obscuring the fighting – and the bodies.

The Royalist pikemen held their position, desperate not to lose the ground they’d gained. William strained his eyes, he imagined Richard being part of it, had he not fallen at Stratton. “Jabe, come on,” he shouted and half carried the little man to within a few yards of the top. He dived for cover behind some rocks. William fired off a shot and an enemy soldier fell but as he glanced across at the Royalist pikemen Bevil Grenville was no longer there. William hadn’t seen the crushing blow that had sent him to the ground. He lay there, motionless. Another officer was urging them on, afraid they might turn and run. They didn’t. Instead, the sight of their fallen leader drove them and they pushed forward, intent on revenge.

The Royalist musketeers picked off many of Waller’s defenders and William took aim at the portly captain of the pike. The shot was intended for his chest but with his usual accuracy he pulled it to the right and the musket ball slammed into the man’s upper arm, tearing the muscle from the bone. He grabbed his arm and screamed. The momentary distraction was all it needed. One of the Cornish pikeman broke formation and plunged his weapon into his midriff. “For Grenville,” he shouted and the man sank to his knees. As the pike was withdrawn his guts erupted. Still conscious, his blood covered intestines burst from his mutilated stomach. He toppled forward and began to jerk violently. The push of pike was twisting one way and then the other and now, like a demented crab, it shifted sideways and the heavy-booted feet of friend and foe crushed the last breath from his body.

The sides were now too close for musket fire and the Royalists charged using their weapons as clubs. William left Jabe and ran forward to join them. He gripped the muzzle of his musket and swung it time and again. His size made him a formidable soldier and his opponents recoiled under the onslaught. He felt the jarring as the butt came into contact with the unprotected head of a young soldier and he saw the blood and brains scatter across the ground. There was no time for pity. Five men fell to his blows, each one for Richard.

As darkness fell, the action ceased. The Royalists remained on alert, aware that the enemy was just a short distance away. Jabe was quiet as they waited and watched, ready for any move, nerves on edge. At 1.00am Waller’s musketeers opened fire again. In the darkness it was even more terrifying but after a single volley, silence returned. William gripped his musket and waited, Jabe too. An hour passed. There was nothing apart from the eerie glow of the enemy’s match, no movement, no sound. Hopton could wait no longer. He called for a volunteer and a young pikeman dropped onto his stomach and crawled out into the darkness, towards the enemy position. As he disappeared, his colleagues waited for the sound to signal the end of his war. But there was no shot and before long he shouted, “There’s no one here, they’ve gone.”

The Royalist officers rushed over to find that Waller’s men had left burning match to make it seem they were still there. The trick had worked again. The Parliamentarians had quietly moved out and were now on their way back to Bath.



The Royalists had won the battle but it was a pyrrhic hollow victory, bought with the lives of many Cornishmen. Sir Bevil Grenville was carried from the battlefield but there was nothing that could be done and the following day he died of his wounds. Ralph Hopton announced his death to moans of anguish: it was a death to cloud any victory. William and Jabe stood with the others. Grenville had not been their commander but it was difficult to remain unmoved. The sight of soldiers' tears would soften any heart.

The Royalist Army withdrew from Lansdown Hill in the morning but even as they marched away there was one more tragedy to bear. William heard the explosion and dived for cover but there was no attack, a powder wagon had exploded. He and Jabe were some way back, safe from the blast, but he could see the devastation. Wreckage was strewn all over the place and there were many casualties. Major Thomas Sheldon lay dead and Sir Ralph Hopton was on the ground, writhing in agony. Men rushed to help but he was badly wounded and unlikely to survive. They placed him on a litter and continued their march towards Marshfield. Prince Maurice took command of his regiments.

This was a victorious army marching from the field of battle but it was not obvious from their demeanour, there was none of the usual frivolity. Each man had his thoughts, of his friends, of Hopton and of course, of Grenville. William thought of the Cornish who'd fallen. "For what?" he asked, "What was the bloody point?" The question was directed at no one in particular and had more relevance than he knew. Despite his defeat, Waller had gathered fresh recruits and was heading back to Lansdown Hill.

William found it difficult to clear his mind of the action. The episode with Jabe hadn't helped and then there was the death of Bevil Grenville. Worse though, were the haunting faces of the young men he'd killed. He'd felt no remorse as he swung his musket: there was no time then, but now the waste sickened him. It was different when he fired his musket, he was detached then, not even sure if he had hit his target, but close fighting was different: he could see their eyes, their desperation, their fear. They were young boys for God's sake: someone's sons and he'd crushed them like a beetle under his foot. Men fought for different reasons and some would plead it was in God's name but is this what God wants? This so-called God of peace and mercy: is this really what he wants? He covered his face with his huge hands and the tears flowed. It was the first time he'd cried for many years.

As they marched, Jabe asked if anyone knew where they were headed.

William shrugged his shoulders. "No idea. We're in no state to fight anyone at the moment. I reckon we'll lie low for a while."

When they bedded down for the night Jabe was unusually quiet, there was none of the usual banter. Neither he nor William had spoken of the time on the slope, it was a moment that had passed and may never occur again. It had brought them closer as friends.

William woke the next morning but Jabe was not beside him. Probably at the latrine, he thought. He smiled to himself. He'd never met anyone like him before. On the march up from Stratton, he'd joked about his stories and told him that the way he went on it sounded like he was related to the King. His little friend had just laughed and William said, "It's the way you are Jabe and I wouldn't have you any different. I'm glad we teamed up and God willing, we'll help each other get back to our families."

Jabe had still not returned and William asked around but no one had seen him. It was about an hour later when he trudged towards them, wet through and covered in mud.

"What the hell happened to you? You're bloody soaked: fall in the latrine pit did you?" The other men waved him away or held their noses.

"I fell in a bog: it was like quicksand. I couldn't pull myself free."

“So how did you get out?”

“That’s the thing, someone pulled me out.”

“What d’you mean, someone? Who was it?”

“It was a horseman. I reckon it was one of their scouts.”

There was no laughter. It was believable, amazing but believable. Common decency existed even in this dreadful war.

## Chapter 42

### The Battle Of Roundway Down

William closed his eyes but couldn’t sleep. He knew that Jabe had tried to escape, why else would he be anywhere near the bog? His head was in a mess. He would have to keep his eye on him otherwise he was going to end up on the end of a rope.

The Royalists left Marshfield on the 7<sup>th</sup> July and headed for Chippenham: unaware that Waller was just one day behind and intent on revenge. He knew of their losses at Lansdown, and that his friend, Sir Ralph Hopton, was badly injured, maybe dead.

As the Royalists moved through the countryside, they looked like a defeated army. By the 9<sup>th</sup> July they were within a couple of miles of Devizes when a shout went up from the back of the column: Waller had caught up with them. He drove at them and Mohun’s regiment turned to face him: William and Jabe were in the thick of it again. The main Royalist force raced away while the rear-guard held them off and as the light faded, Waller called off the attack. Mohun’s regiment suffered heavy casualties but it had prevented a disaster and the next day the Royalists reached Devizes. Waller took up a position on Roundway Down.

Devizes was unfortified and the soldiers raced to erect barricades before Waller could attack. Sir Ralph Hopton, paralysed and temporarily blinded by the flash, hadn’t only survived – he was up and giving orders. As they carried material for the barricades, Jabe moaned. “I can’t see us making it this time, it’ll take more than this to keep them out.”

Moaning again, thought William. He must be getting better. “We’ll make it. You stick by me and we’ll take on the lot of them.”

“Bleddy bullshit,” shouted one of the others. “We don’t stand a chance and you know it.”

As he kept watch that night, Jabe saw the Royalist cavalry ride out from the town. The chance of a successful night attack was remote but he guessed it was better than waiting to be slaughtered. Prince Maurice, the Marquis of Hertford and the Earl of Carnarvon were at its head and Jabe hoped that surprise would be a potent weapon. It was only later that he learned that they’d burst through the enemy line and ridden away to freedom. The infantry was told they’d gone to fetch reinforcements from Oxford but Jabe shook his head. “Runaway Cavalry again,” he said. “The bastards have left us to it, deserted us to save their own necks.” William found it strange that it was necessary for three of the top officers to leave but he didn’t comment. At first light, Hopton explained that their survival depended on the cavalry making it back in time.

The explosion had cost them seven of their nine barrels of powder and they were down to 150 pounds of match. Bed-cords were collected from the houses, it was beaten and boiled in resin to produce 15 hundredweight of match. "Apart from that we've no problem," murmured Jabe. It was loud enough for everyone to hear. His banter was having an unsettling effect on the other men and when he said, "We've just gotta hold them off till our brave cavalry decides to come back."

William told him to shut up. "Look, we've got enough problems without you going on about them."

The little man was unrepentant. "Don't blame me, I didn't run away. Anyway, what are we going to fight with?"

"Look, you cantankerous bastard," said William, only half joking, "all you ever do is moan."

"Well, what about the townspeople, are they going to fight with us?"

"I don't know," snapped William, "you'd better ask them."

Not long after the Royalist cavalry had escaped, Waller had struck a critical blow, he'd captured a supply convey on its way with munitions. His men were buoyant and when he addressed them, he reminded them of the Lansdown defeat, he wanted revenge on their minds as they went into battle. For two days the Parliamentarian artillery pounded the town. The foot soldiers then attacked but despite their superior numbers, the Royalists held out.

It was the 12<sup>th</sup> July, Hopton sent a messenger to Waller to request free passage for Bevil Grenville's body. Waller had respect for both Grenville and Hopton and he'd no hesitation in granting the request. When the messenger returned, he also carried the news that the munitions convoy wouldn't arrive.

Jabe sat on the ground twanging the imaginary strings on his musket butt. "Tis all up with us, Will. We can't fight guns with pikes."

"There's still the cavalry," argued William. "If they got through then they could be on their way back by now."

"If. You're full of ifs," he said. "Let's face it, we're not going to see that lot again."

In an attempt to gain some time, Hopton decided to try a ploy. He sent a messenger to Waller asking for terms. The Parliamentary leader was delighted, Hopton was a friend and he'd no wish to cause him any more hardship. The guns fell silent and Waller waited. As each hour passed, he became more impatient until he finally realised that he'd been fooled. At 6.00pm he gave the order to resume the attack.

"Well that worked," said Jabe. "We've certainly stirred him up and now he's throwing everything at us." The delay had won a few hours but there was still no sign of the rescue force and Hopton knew that his next request for terms would be ignored. Unless the cavalry arrived soon, they faced annihilation.

When the next attack began it was heavy but with the onset of darkness and heavy rain, it quickly ceased. The people of Devizes were terrified. They knew the penalty for refusing to surrender and feared a bloodbath. Once again, the weary defenders took their positions and waited.

The next morning, the 13<sup>th</sup> July, the weather had cleared and both sides knew the day would prove decisive. Jabe could be heard cursing the runaway cavalry and William was beginning to think that he could be right. They leant against the barricades: their eyes fixed on the point of attack.

“Bleddy quiet,” said William.

“Yea,” said Jabe, “I reckon I just heard that spider fart.”

From where he was positioned, William could see Hopton gazing out into the countryside. “I think it’s a trick and I reckon Hopton does too. Could be that Waller’s trying to get us to leave the town. Either that or the relief force has arrived.”

Jabe scoffed. “Some hope,” he said. “Some bleddy hope.”

Still there was no movement but then, in the distance, they heard something. There were shouts and the unmistakable sound of gunfire. “Bleddy hell,” shouted one of the soldiers, “I reckon tis the relief force.”

Maurice had reached Oxford by midday on the 11<sup>th</sup> and despite Jabe’s doubts, a force had been despatched. Hertford remained there but Maurice and a few hundred of his men left the next day with Sir John Byron’s brigade of horse. They joined up with Henry, Lord Wilmot and Lord Crawford’s brigade which had escaped when the munitions convoy had been captured. It was a combined force of 1,800 men, not large but perhaps enough. By mid-afternoon on the 13<sup>th</sup> July they approached Devizes. In the distance lay the town with Hopton’s remaining force of about 2,500 foot. Between them was Waller with 2,500 foot, 2,000 horse and 500 dragoons.

The relief force went straight into the attack. It charged at Waller’s cavalry and with no chance to recover, the terrified troopers were forced back towards the edge of a sheer drop. Some turned to fight while others tried to force their mounts to negotiate the descent. One more charge sent them over the edge and they plunged to the bottom in one writhing mass. Those that survived the fall tried to defend themselves but it was hopeless.

Waller’s infantry had seen the fate of its horse. Many fled while others prepared themselves for the inevitable attack.

William looked around for Jabe. Pre-battle nerves always took him that way and as he ran from the latrines, he shouted to him. With the little man in full flight, frantically adjusting his breeches, the Royalist defenders charged out of the town and headed for the battle. They found the remnants of Waller’s infantry being cut to pieces by Maurice’s cavalry. It was an uneven contest.

For the Parliamentarians it was a crushing defeat and many of those who’d run from the scene were now heading for the safety of Bristol. Waller was on his way to Evesham.

## Chapter 43

“Richard seems to have greatly improved my dear, it must be your nursing.” The farmer’s wife beamed her approval. The girl was embarrassed but she smiled. She’d become close to Maud. Despite the age difference she’d been invited to use her first name. The warmth of this cuddly little soul seemed like the mother she’d never had.

“He seems to feel the pain in his arm more than his chest,” said the girl, “and yet that’s only a flesh wound. His chest is much more serious.”

Maud shrugged, “Maybe, maybe not. Now I must go, I’ve work to do.”

The door closed noisily and Richard opened his eyes. He smiled. "Louisa. It's a lovely name, it suits you."

She blushed. "I must go now, to feed the pigs."

"Not yet Louisa, stay awhile." She sat on his bed. "I believe this injury will kill me – I can't live with a bullet inside me."

"You mustn't think that way," she said. "I've known men live a long life with such an injury."

He ignored the comment. "I'm to be buried in Cornwall, to guard the border against the English." He closed his eyes but as she moved, he spoke again. "I sometimes wonder how I became involved in this, fighting for a King I don't know and like even less. A King who cares little for his people but much for the taxes they pay him."

"Then why did you not join the other side? I've heard them speak in much the same way."

"Cornwall wouldn't fare well under them. My fight's against Parliament, not for Charles."

Louisa nodded. "Walter told me you were shot in the back by one of our men."

Richard paused. "An accident?"

She shook her head. "He said it was the man you fought to protect me."

Richard's lips tightened, "So, he won in the end."

"If it gave him any pleasure then it wasn't for long. Your friends ripped open his guts and threw him in the pit with the enemy."

Richard nodded, "I think I'll sleep now. I'm afraid Louisa, hold me."

## **Chapter 44**

### **The Fall of Bristol**

Bristol was the next target for the Cornish Army: the second port in the Kingdom. By the 23<sup>rd</sup> July Prince Rupert was within two miles of it and Maurice was crossing the Avon. They combined to make a force of about 14,000 foot and 600 horse.

Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, the Parliamentary Governor of Bristol, had less than 2,000 soldiers but the city was well protected by a formidable wall. Despite that, there was a feeling they couldn't hold out for long against such a huge army.

Prince Rupert spread his troops along the three-mile wall and summoned Fiennes to surrender. His refusal came as no surprise.

The artillery bombardment began. The ground shook as the huge siege guns roared their message and as cannon balls pounded the walls, the people scrambled to find cover. By the end of the day, Bristol had taken a battering but the perimeter wall had held.

The next day, the 25<sup>th</sup> July, Prince Rupert gathered together his commanders. Opinions were divided. Some wanted to mount a siege and starve the inhabitants into submission while others pressed for a full attack. Bristol was supplied from the river and it convinced Rupert that a siege would be a lengthy affair. He'd made his decision: an attack would begin at 3.00am the next day.

The terrain to the north, where Rupert was, made a frontal attack possible but from the south, the section covered by the Cornish Army, it was a different matter. It was more difficult if not suicidal.

William shook his head. "So all we gotta do is cross that ditch, climb the rampart and then race across open ground. Then we gotta cross the river and get inside the castle. Tis madness, we'll be throwing our lives away."

Jabe took a swig of something. "I needed that. I wonder if there's food in heaven."

It was almost three o'clock. The Cornish regiments were in place and awaiting the signal. To the left was Sir Thomas Basset with the combined regiments of Grenville and Godolphin. Sir Nicolas Slanning was in the centre with his regiment of miners and on the right was Colonel Buck with the Marquis of Hertford's men. Prince Maurice was in the rear.

Slanning led the assault: he attacked even before the signal gun. The defending fire was fearsome and scores fell in the first charge. Scaling ladders were dragged forward and pushed into position across the ditch but it was wider than thought and they dropped into the water. Wagons were pushed in to form makeshift bridges but many sank. It was chaotic.

The weight of shot was murderous and the water was crimson with blood but despite the difficulties some made it across. Gasping and spluttering they hauled themselves out and charged towards the ramparts. Jabe lost his musket in the mad scramble but he grabbed another from a fallen colleague. He was soaking wet and had no chance of loading it.

William hadn't even made it to the water. As he ran forward, bodies littered the ground and he tripped and fell. He lay there dazed and with blood pouring from a head wound, lead shot kicking up dirt all around him. A cart lay on its side and he managed to roll behind it. He could see Jabe on the far side of the ditch, somehow the little man had made it across and now he was trying to climb the ramparts.

The action lasted for about three hours. Then came the order to withdraw and the survivors scrambled back across the ditch. More were shot as they raced for cover. It had been an unequal struggle and an act of gross stupidity. Bodies lay strewn over the ground or half-submerged in the water. A third of the attackers had been killed. Most were ordinary soldiers but many were officers including Colonel John Trevanion. Sir Nicholas Slanning had been shot and he lingered on in agony for three weeks before he too became a name on the list of those who wouldn't return. Coming so soon after the death of Sir Bevil Grenville, the loss of these two brave and inspirational leaders was a devastating blow.

Back in the camp, William wandered through the rows of the wounded, he watched the Royalist physicians as they tried to patch them up. For some, there was little point and all they received was a comforting hand from a fellow soldier. William stopped to talk to one. He'd lost an eye and his nose and most of his mouth had been shot away. The big man turned away in despair.

News that Prince Rupert had made a breakthrough was greeted with cheers. He sent for the Cornish infantry to bolster his force and Prince Maurice gathered together all he could and set out to join his brother. William's bandage was bright red but he was not going to miss the final push. "I'm alright," he shouted as he and Jabe set off.

The breach was small but Rupert urged his men through the gap and into the city. They fanned out and raced through the paths, firing their muskets and slashing their swords at whoever challenged them. William thought that it was all over but the castle itself stood as a secure fortress and the Royalists prepared for a long siege.

From his vantage point, Nathaniel Fiennes could see that it was hopeless. He knew that he could hold out for some days, even weeks, but he'd already made up his mind: he would ask to parley. Rupert was taken by surprise. He ordered an immediate ceasefire and officers from the two sides met to discuss terms. The following morning the Parliamentarians marched out leaving Bristol in Royalist hands, the second greatest city in the land had fallen.

William and his colleagues chose not to join the celebrations: they had no stomach for it. Victory had been bought with the lives of countless brave men: many were their friends. Following a battle the Cornish often became mutinous but now they were quiet, saddened by the loss of their fallen comrades. There was anger too, not least from Jabe, who cursed Prince Rupert for ordering the attack. Maurice had wanted a siege and it was ironic that the Cornish, so opposed to Rupert's plan, should've been given the most difficult section to attack. "Maybe he thinks we're good fighters," said Jabe. "Either that or we don't matter." It was difficult to ignore the possibility that the Royalist leaders considered them to be cannon fodder.

"Whatever the reason, tis done," said William. "They've gone to meet their maker." The loss of so many of the foot and of its commanders was a savage blow to an army still reeling from its recent losses. Prince Maurice was well aware of the mood as he moved around the camp. There were stunned faces, battle-hardened men reduced to tears by the loss of their comrades. William's lip trembled but despite the heartbreak he would fight on, do his bit to avenge the Cornishmen lost at Lansdown and Bristol.

The following day, the King arrived to join the celebrations. For him it was a splendid victory and he made a great show of approval. "Pity his Royal self didn't show us a bit more compassion," said Jabe expecting a reaction from William. Instead, his friend just nodded, it was enough to show his agreement.

The fall of Bristol was reason enough for Charles to be there but there was something else: a delicate issue to resolve. He knew that Hertford had promised Sir Ralph Hopton the position of Governor of Bristol but this didn't fit with his own plan. He'd already decided to offer it to Prince Rupert, his nephew, and now he needed to appease a man who'd supported him so well.

Sir Ralph Hopton had been the leader of the Cornish Army and when he was offered the governorship, the men under his command saw it as an honour, recognition for the part they'd played in the fall of Bristol.

William Ennor was incensed. "Heard what's happened? Bleddy slap in the face, that's what it is. He should've left it to Hertford to sort out." Jabe wasn't interested. As far as he was concerned it was a petty quarrel but William persisted. "The King's given it to Rupert and then had the cheek to make Hopton second in command. Said he didn't know what Hertford had done. That's why he came to Bristol, to sort it out."

"Then it looks like your King's made another balls of it," said Jabe. "He doesn't half drop himself in it sometimes. Still, we can't argue with his Royal self, can we?"

William knew he was being goaded and finished the conversation with a stifled comment that sounded a bit like, "Bleddy King."

Thankfully for King Charles, Sir Ralph accepted the role of lieutenant governor with good grace. He appointed Lieutenant Colonel Slingsby of Mohun's regiment as his deputy.

Of much more importance was whether the Cornish Army would remain as a separate unit or be merged with the King's force ready to march on London. Most wanted to head back west – to protect Cornwall. If they went with the King then they could end up anywhere.

Charles knew of the rumblings amongst the Cornish. He'd no wish to dent their enthusiasm or cause them to desert and when he'd knighted two of their number, John Grenville, the son of Sir Bevil, and Captain Chichester Wrey of Mohun's regiment, it had been well received by the ordinary soldiers. He listened to the arguments but he'd already decided. The Western Army, or the Cornish Army if they preferred, would remain as a separate fighting force and would operate in the West Country.

Relations between the Earl of Hertford and Prince Maurice hadn't been good and Charles decided to resolve the problem. The Earl would accompany him while command of the Western Army would pass to his nephew, Prince Maurice. Since Stratton, the Cornish had been under the command of three generals: Hopton, Hertford and now, Prince Maurice.

Three of the Cornish regiments had lost their leaders: Sir Bevil Grenville, Sir Nicholas Slanning and Sir John Trevanion. Maurice now had to appoint replacements. The newly knighted Sir John Grenville was the obvious choice to assume command of his father's regiment: it was a decision that found favour with the men. Slanning's command passed to Thomas Bassett of Tehidy and Thomas St Aubyn of Clowance took over John Trevanion's. William Godolphin and Warwick Lord Mohun remained in charge of their regiments.

William and Jabe were on the way back from the latrines when they spotted a group of men from their regiment, they were deep in conversation. William nodded towards them. "What's that lot plotting I wonder?"

Jabe frowned. "Hang on, I'll find out. Could be there's something in it for us." As he strolled over, the conversation died and he sensed that he was not welcome. "Alright Boys, I know when I aren't wanted. I'll push off and let you do your bit of plotting."

Despite his annoying ways, Jabe was popular amongst the other soldiers and one of them shouted after him. "Jabe, tis nothing like that. Anyway, we were going to mention it to you once we got it sorted."

"Got what sorted?" asked William, who'd followed Jabe over. "You know what? I reckon you lot are planning to push off back home. Right, am I?"

"Yeah, you're right but keep your bleddy voice down."

"Hell, that was a good guess," said Jabe. "Here, are you boys serious about asking us?"

"Jabe, we're having none of it. Next thing you'll end up with a rope round your neck. I wish you well Boys, I hope you make it. We'll keep our mouths shut but we want nothing to do with it."

One of the men nodded in appreciation. "We've seen more than our share of bloodshed, at Lansdown and here, and we can't take no more." William nodded – he could understand their reasons.

A few Cornish soldiers joined Prince Rupert's Army and some remained with Hopton but the vast majority, including William and Jabe, remained with the Western Army. To them, it was still the Cornish Army and if they had to fight on, then it was the only place to be.



In early August 1643 the Earl of Carnarvon left Bristol with his cavalry and dragoons and headed for Dorchester. It was to be their first target. After that they would turn their attention to the remaining Parliamentary strongholds from Lyme to Plymouth.

As Prince Maurice and the Western Army marched away from Bristol, William took a final look back, he was glad to be leaving. He'd developed a deep-rooted hatred for the place. To the west lay Cornwall and while they may not be taking the direct route, they were heading in the right direction.

## Chapter 45

At Plymouth, Colonel Digby was busy. His attacks kept the pressure on the town and he even succeeded in capturing one of the forts. It was eventually recovered but it increased the people's fear that their town could be taken. The news from Bristol had added to their concerns, after all, if it could fall then what chance would they stand when the Cornish Army joined in the siege. Defeat now seemed certain and there were few in Plymouth, or elsewhere in the West Country, who still felt that Parliament could win.

## Chapter 46

It was a hot day and John was resting on an old tree stump when he heard the sound of a slow-moving horse heading his way. The mill was nearby and he thought it might be a local farmer bringing his corn for grinding. Had he known it was Nat Tregonning, he would've hidden.

"John Ennor. Your mother said I'd find you here. Mr Treleigh's becoming impatient for news, what can I tell him?"

John's hatred for the man was obvious but he knew that he dare not cross him. He stood up and moved to the side of his horse. "The tenant was reluctant to co-operate but he's agreed to pay the back rent."

"That much I know," said Tregonning. "He's settled in full and has now left for the war. His family have been thrown out and the place re-let."

John's resentment turned to anger but he controlled his language. "How could you do that, have you no compassion?"

"It's business I'm afraid but don't worry yourself about him, he was a drunkard and lucky not to have been pushed down a shaft. Now what of the other little job? That is of greater concern to Mr Treleigh."

"I've found nothing against Thomas Prowse except his liking for ale and women."

"Well we all have weaknesses but I'd hoped for something more. I expect more positive news the next time we meet. Here's something for your trouble." John watched him disappear, grateful that another job hadn't been passed his way. He looked at the money, it was more than he would earn in a month.

## Chapter 47

The Cornish had proved to be formidable fighters. Back home there was immense pride in their achievements but the little nation was stunned by the loss of so many of its sons. It grieved for the deaths of the soldiers and their inspiring leaders: Bevil Grenville, John Trevanion, Nicholas Slanning and Sidney Godolphin. To some extent, the Cornish now lost interest in the war and reverted to their first instinct, to protect Cornwall. Apart from that, it was harvest time and for many people that was more important than any war. William wondered how John and the family were managing without him.

Fighting a war was expensive and it fell to Cornwall's Sheriff, Francis Basset, to raise the necessary funds. Some came from confiscated estates but everyone was expected to contribute and he was forever cajoling Royalist supporters to improve their efforts. Royalist ships were also helping the cause and the London news-sheets wrote of the Pirates of Falmouth Haven who'd taken two English ships to their den of thieves at Pendennis.

## Chapter 48

The news in Plymouth was that Prince Maurice and the Earl of Carnarvon would soon join Colonel Digby. The mayor did his best to reassure his people that the defences were sound and would hold. Within a few days he received a fresh report that the Royalist Army had turned south towards Dorset. It was greeted with relief but he knew their turn would come. Meanwhile, Dorchester surrendered without a fight and Maurice settled his army there for a few days before moving on to take Weymouth and Portland.

The gloom of Lansdown and Bristol was beginning to lift. "It's alright while we're winning," said Jabe, "it takes your mind off it but it'll never be the same again, not with all they boys gone."

William nodded. He'd not forgotten them but he wanted to move on, to prepare himself for the next encounter. "Trouble is," he said, "I've no bleddy idea where we are."

They were at Lyme, and there they met stiff resistance. The people were determined not to give in and when Maurice summoned them to surrender, they refused. Like Plymouth, they were supplied by sea and wouldn't be starved into submission. The townspeople prepared for a long siege but as they manned the defences they were amazed to see the Royalist Army march away. Many thought it a trick but Prince Maurice had decided not to waste time there. He headed for Exeter.

"Now, if we can take that, it'll be some prize to hand to the King," said William, "better than buggering around up here."

"I reckon if we take it then your King should send us home for a few days. Mind you," added Jabe, "I've heard tell there's some pretty maids there just waiting for my favours."

William laughed, "All we gotta do is to get them to open their gates."

"What, the place or the women?" quipped Jabe.

For the people of Plymouth, it was mostly bad news. Success followed success for the Royalists and now they were about to be offered some help from an unexpected quarter – Sir Alexander Carew, a Cornishman and committed Parliamentarian, was about to defect.

Carew had played a major role in the defence of Plymouth. When he and his younger half-brother, John, had chosen to fight for Parliament it had caused a huge family split. Now, with Parliament disintegrating across the West Country, it seemed the war was lost. He still believed in Parliament but the prospect of

holding out against such a tide of Royalist pressure seemed hopeless. His fears for the people of Plymouth and for his family led him to make a fateful decision. He approached Sir John Berkeley and offered to surrender – to open the gates.

At first, Berkeley doubted that the note was genuine. He read it again. The siege had lasted so long and claimed so many lives that it was hard to believe it could soon be over. He replied, assuring Carew that the town wouldn't be sacked and that he would receive a full pardon. This addressed Carew's concerns but he had to be sure that Berkeley was able to make such promises. He asked for confirmation from the King or at least the highest military authority in the area. The delay cost him dear. As he waited for a response he was betrayed.

His arrest stunned the people of Plymouth. They'd signed a solemn covenant to fight to the last man and couldn't accept his treachery. They demanded his execution and would've carried it out themselves given the chance. But the law demanded he be given a fair trial and he was taken by ship to the Tower of London to answer the charge of High Treason.

It was over a year before the case was heard and when the session opened, he pleaded that he'd acted in the best interest of the town, his intention had been to avoid its destruction. There was some sympathy for this but under Martial Law he'd conspired to surrender the town and there could be only one penalty, he was sentenced to death. He may have avoided it by implicating others but he refused and at noon the following day, the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1644, the sentence was carried out on Tower Hill. Ironically, his treacherous action redeemed him in the eyes of his Royalist family.

## **Chapter 49**

### **The Fall of Exeter**

Prince Maurice, with about 3,000 foot, moved to Honiton and from there to Exeter where, in late August, he joined Sir John Berkeley who was holding the blockade.

"We got the buggers this time," said William. "Then it'll just be Plymouth and we'll have the King back on his throne."

Jabe smirked, "Just Exeter and Plymouth, hell, no trouble there then!"

"You can bleddy mock," said William, "but this is the best chance we've had. I tell you, you'll soon be snuggling up to one of they there Devon maids you're always on about."

Jabe suddenly became more eager. "Now, that's a cause worth fighting for."

Many people on both sides could now see an early end to the fighting and most were convinced it was the King who would win but plans were afoot that could scupper that. Parliament had reached agreement with the Scots: they were to enter the war on their side.

As Maurice approached Exeter, he took Topsham, a small community beside the river. From there he would control the passage of goods. With his army spread out in front of the walls, Maurice demanded its surrender. While he waited, Jabe took bets on the outcome.

"I hope you know what you're doing," said William. "If you can't pay out there's going to be a hell of a lot of fists flying."

“Now don’t you worry, whichever way it goes, I’ll be alright.”

William nodded, “I bet you will. Anyway, it looks like a fine place. They reckon there’s a lot of Royalists in there but if we storm it then they’re going to suffer too. My money’s on surrender but maybe not for a day or two.”

The Earl of Stamford was in charge of Exeter. He knew they could withstand a short siege but food stocks would soon run out. He was also aware of the penalty for premature surrender. Many commanders had been charged with treason for giving in too soon.

When the attacks began, many Cornish fell to the Parliamentary musketeers on the ramparts but as the days went by, it became clear that they couldn’t hold out much longer. When Stamford was confident that he had done all he could, he asked for terms.

Maurice and his army were ecstatic. This was a great prize and as the gates opened, they strutted inside. Coming so soon after the fall of Bristol it was a staggering blow to Parliamentary morale. It was an important centre and now it was lost to them.

Exeter became the new seat of western Royalism and soon the Mint was transferred to there from Truro and Cornishman Sir Richard Vyvyan placed in charge of coin production.

For the King, it was one more glorious victory. He recognised the contribution made by the Cornish and wrote a letter of thanks. Copies were to be displayed in all churches and other public places.

Maurice garrisoned the place and set about identifying potential troublemakers: the Royalists were happy to point them out. For the soldiers, it was a chance to rest and to find out what the place had to offer.

Jabe had just been to the latrine where he’d picked up an interesting piece of information. He ambled over to where William was talking to a group of soldiers. “He’s going,” he announced, clearly pleased at being the first with the news again.

William’s annoyance at the interruption was outweighed by his curiosity. “Who’s going?”

“Warwick, he’s gone’ I tell you. Been made up to general colonel...or is it colonel general of the five western counties.”

“Why the hell have they done that?” William asked.

“Well,” said Jabe, content that he now had centre stage. “He’s gone off to join the King in Oxford.”

“So what happens now?” asked one soldier, “I mean, who’s going to take over?”

Jabe usually worked on the principle that if he didn’t know then he would make it up but on this occasion he was sure of his facts. “His brother, Sir Charles. He’s already in charge. Anyway, what were you lot talking about?”

“What, before you interrupted?” said William. Jabe frowned. “We were just saying that Sir Ralph Hopton’s been made a lord.”

“Bleddy hell,” said Jabe, “I bet you’re happy about that, him being your mate. Why’d they do that then?”

“Well I reckon it’s to make up for cock-up at Bristol, when Rupert was made governor over his head. Anyway, whatever the reason, I reckon he deserves it.”

By now, the people of Plymouth had shrugged off the shock of Alexander Carew’s treachery. It had drawn them together and strengthened their resolve to hold out against everything Digby could throw at them. Apart from that, the Parliamentary fleet was sailing into harbour. The twenty-two ships were a welcome sight: they brought much needed supplies and also infuriated the Royalists ranged against them on the other side of the estuary.

Unlike Plymouth, Exeter was a place of mixed loyalties. Many welcomed the Royalists but others, perhaps the majority, would happily slit an enemy throat. “I’ve a mind to taste the ale here,” said William, “to see if it’s any better than back home.”

“We’ll need permission,” replied Jabe, “and some company: you know what they said about being on our guard.”

William had no problem in persuading a few others to join them and with permission from their officer, the group strode out to visit a few alehouses. The first seemed empty until they spotted a couple in the corner of the room, clearly intent on making the most of the gap in custom. Jabe grinned as the young girl pushed the man off and ran from the room, trying to cover her body as best she could. “Well built girl,” he declared, “fine pair of udders.” The man was considerably older and from his sheepish look it was clear that the girl was not his wife. Still smiling, Jabe said, “We’re brave and sorry to interrupt Sir, only we got a powerful thirst on us but we wouldn’t mind waiting if you want to finish what you were doing.”

The man grunted, “There’ll be time later.” Before he’d poured the first drink another woman entered and the landlord nodded towards her. “You did me a favour, that’s my wife, I thought she was out shopping.”

They decided the ale was good but they were keen to try another brew and they moved on to another alehouse in a side-street. Jabe was in high spirits as they walked in but his banter stopped at the sight of a red-haired woman clearly touting for business. “Hell,” he said, “she’s more like a witch than a whore. I aren’t going to stir her cauldron!”

“Pity,” she said, “I charge half price for dwarfs.”

Jabe was determined to have the last word but William dragged him outside and said, “I reckon tis time we were heading back. They’ll think we’ve deserted.”

They entered the camp just as a group of Cornish recruits arrived. Jabe nodded towards them. “I reckon the King’s letter must have brought them in, that and the news about the fall of Exeter. I wonder where they’re from.”

“I know where one of them’s from.”

“Where’s that then?”

“Down my way,” said William.

“Friend of yours, is he?” There was concern in Jabe’s voice. He didn’t want their friendship threatened by old relationships.

“No, and that’s the way it’s going to stay.” Jabe was both puzzled and relieved.

With Exeter garrisoned, Prince Maurice led the remainder of his army out of the main gate and headed south.

“Now for Plymouth,” said William. “We’ll have the buggers this time.” But Plymouth was not the target: Maurice was heading for Dartmouth.

## Chapter 50

News of the fall of both Bristol and Exeter had reached north Cornwall but Richard had other matters on his mind, his feelings for Louisa had grown. He watched as she busied herself in his room, her figure disguised by her rough, loose clothing. He longed to see her body. They’d kissed on a couple of occasions, “Essential medication,” as she put it.

At first, she was reluctant to talk of her past but eventually she told him she was from Cusgarne. “I was married but he was killed down the mine. The shock of it took the baby inside me.” She paused, forcing herself to hold back the tears. “My father had kicked me out when he found I was pregnant and even after we were wed, he wouldn’t speak to me. Even after I’d lost my husband and baby, he wouldn’t take me back.”

Richard guessed she was little more than twenty although he’d the good grace not to ask. She was pretty and strong in character, perhaps toughened by hardship. “So what did you do?”

“I found work. I did all sorts of things and then I had an offer to become a housekeeper for an old widower.”

There was a moment’s silence.

Her voice changed and she said, “I became his whore.” Richard was taken aback: he wished he’d not asked. “He died just before the war and I decided to follow the army and practise my new-found skills.” She left the room but not before Richard had seen her tears: she was not quite as tough as he thought.

Louisa didn’t return that evening and when the farmer’s wife brought his meal he asked where she was. “She went for a walk, said something about you wanting to be alone. I thought it strange seeing as how close you’d become.” The woman stayed while he ate his pottage. “She’s fond of you, you must know that. When you had your fever, she slept with you to give you warmth, she seemed happy just to hold you.” Richard didn’t reply. “You know of her background I expect, it’s been hard for her.”

“I know of her trade if that’s what you mean.”

“You did a brave thing when you fought to protect her but you’ve no right to judge. She didn’t choose that sort of life. Who knows what any of us would’ve done in her situation. You’ve a father who loves you, one who gave you a chance in life. She hadn’t.”

The farmer’s wife left him with his thoughts. He slept fitfully that night: his waking thoughts were of Louisa.

He was already awake as daylight crept into the room. There was a knock on the door and to his surprise it was Louisa. She looked tired, as if she hadn’t slept.

She placed his breakfast on the bed and turned to leave but stopped when he spoke. "I missed you last night: where did you sleep?"

"In the stable, I thought it best."

"Because of what you told me?"

"Yes, and because of your reaction."

He shook his head. "It wasn't because of what you told me. I already knew, Walter told me after the fight. It was the hardness in your voice that surprised me." Louisa looked at the floor. "I'm glad you told me though: it made me realise."

She frowned. "Made you realise what?"

"How much I love you."

Her voice hardened again. "Love? How can you talk of loving a whore?"

Richard reached for her hand. "I love you for what you are, not for what you were. I've never loved anyone as much as you and if you leave me now it will kill me more surely than this musket ball."

The tears streamed down her face and she brushed them away. She looked at him, embarrassed, but the squeak of the floorboard outside brought a smile to her face.

Richard squeezed her hand, "When I'm fully fit, I plan to stay here a while, to help on the farm. It's the least I can do to repay their kindness. Will you stay too? I can't promise much but it'll be a new life for both of us. We won't talk of the past, just of the future."

"The future? Wh...what are you asking?"

"Louisa, I'm asking you to marry me, to be my wife, I won't take no for an answer."

She could hardly speak but when she did it was with a soft, tender voice. "Then it has to be yes." The tears flowed again: it was some time since she'd felt so happy. They held each other and kissed passionately.

"Now Louisa, I believe my fever's returning and I need more warmth."

Louisa laughed. She slipped off her clothes and snuggled in beside him.

## Chapter 51

News from a battle at Newbury in Berkshire was confused. From what William had heard there'd been no clear winner but Parliament had claimed the victory. A soldier who'd travelled with the news told them, "We were there first and spent the night in comfort while Essex's Army slept in the pouring rain. Next day we attacked but they beat us off. Then we made off in the night."

"You mean you ran away?" interrupted Jabe.

The man squirmed. "Well, we'd lost a lot of men and decided to withdraw."

“Sounds like a bleddy defeat to me,” quipped Jabe.

Recent news had been good for the Royalists but the picture was beginning to change. In the north the soldiers were in open revolt over pay and conditions and in Ireland the King had been forced to make a truce with the rebels.

“So he can bring his army home I spose,” said William. “I expect there’ll be a few Irish among them.”

“We can do with the help,” replied Jabe, “even from the bleddy Irish.”

“I thought you said your family was from Ireland.”

“No, no, we’re Welsh, definitely Welsh.”

The Cornish Army headed down the valley towards the little town of Dartmouth, it nestled at the mouth of the river. Like Plymouth, it had declared for Parliament and the people were equally determined that it wouldn’t fall to the King. As the Royalists approached, the defenders left their barricades to face them. It was a futile gesture and they soon fell back into the town. Prince Maurice ordered a siege and sent a summons to the mayor demanding his surrender. They waited.

William thought that the place looked pleasant enough. “Bit like Cornwall,” he said. He wondered about the townsfolk behind the barricades. Yes, they were for Parliament, but in normal times they were probably no different to him. It was the war that changed things, turned people into enemies. The hour passed with no response from the mayor and the officers met to discuss what to do next.

“So what’s the betting,” asked Jabe, “storm or siege?”

“If it’s going to mean us sitting on our asses again while they take pot-shots at us then I’d rather attack,” said William. He didn’t get his way and a rumour was circulating that Prince Maurice was ill.

“Some sort of fever, I reckon,” said Jabe.

“Bleddy doctor now are you?” quipped William.

“Well, you can laugh but from what they’re saying he’s going to snuff it.”

The 4<sup>th</sup> October dawned with a change of tactic. Maurice’s officers decided that they’d waited long enough and they ordered an assault on the outposts. Mohun’s regiment led the attack and before long they’d broken through but it was at a cost, more Cornish lives were lost including the new commander, Sir Charles Mohun.

When the main attack started it was fierce. Smoke from the artillery and muskets filled the air and when it ceased, the foot soldiers surged towards the barricades. The resistance was short-lived and the Royalists poured into the town, mopping up pockets of resistance.

The spoils in this prosperous riverside town were good: muskets, powder, artillery and ships all quickly captured. There were rich pickings and William and Jabe were not slow to take their share. Like so many seaports, Dartmouth was staunchly Parliamentarian and the invaders knew that they would receive little help from the people.



Maurice languished in his bed for days, hovering between life and death. Gradually though, the fever reduced and it seemed that he'd turned the corner. William was on guard duty when Jabe wandered over to tell him. "They say he's on the mend: it'll be a day or two yet but they reckon he's going to make it."

William nodded in approval. "I've no love for foreign princes but we could do worse."

"Yeah, you're right. Anyway, as soon as he's up and about we're off to face Plymouth again."

"Unless he leaves us here," said William. "Someone's gotta stay behind and I could think of worse places with all these women about."

"You be bleddy careful. You don't want to end up like that young pikeman. One of your pleasant women slocked him on and then sliced open his guts."

William pulled at the stubble on his chin, "I heard about that. Poor bugger, I don't spose he even got a hand on her bobbies."

"I doubt it. Anyway, I don't fancy it here. Somewhere a bit further west will do me nicely."

William grunted, "As if we gotta choice. If Maurice says you'll stay then you'll stay."

A voice rang out. "You wouldn't be referring to Prince Maurice would you soldier?" One of the officers had been listening. "Your language shows a lack of respect and I suggest you moderate it. You can rely on me to pass on your request for garrison duty."

"Bugger!" said Jabe. As the officer moved away, he looked at William and mouthed, "You silly bastard."

Prince Maurice made a full recovery and as soon as he was fit, he led his army away from Dartmouth. William and Jabe were with him.

Since Stratton, the Royalist press had eulogized about the Cornish. They applauded their exploits and referred to them as the true conquerors of the West of England.

As they marched towards Plymouth, William couldn't help laughing. "Jabe, you're the most awkward bastard I know. First you don't want to stay and now you're moaning because you can't. What's that all about?"

"Well, I grew to like the place. It was a bit like Penryn, perched there on the river. Then there was the landlord's wife, bit cross-eyed but one hell of a body. I tell you what, I'd lose some weight if I spent a few more days with her."

William nodded, "I thought 'twould be a woman."

Jabe chuckled and then changed the subject. "Here Will, you know that chap, the one you don't like. I saw him looking at you the other day, 'twas as though he wanted to catch your eye."

"I doubt that. Anyway, I don't want to talk about it."

"Right Will. Sorry Will. I didn't know 'twas such a touchy subject. I won't say another word."

Some chance of that, thought William.

Parliament had sent Colonel James Wardlaw with 600 men to help bolster the defences at Plymouth. With Bristol and Exeter lost, it had to hold out. By mid-October the armies of Prince Maurice and Sir John Digby had combined. Digby became the new commander of Lord Mohun's regiment. "Another bleddy leader," said Jabe, "I reckon I must be next in line." The original five regiments were now being referred to as the Old Cornish regiments to differentiate them from others more recently formed.

Royalist reinforcements began to arrive from Ireland. The first, from Munster, landed at Minehead in late October. More were expected. With them were Irish nationals. They were a boost to the Royalist cause but the Parliamentary press was quick to stir up Anglo-Irish hatred and the treatment they received when captured was brutal.

Maurice took command of the entire force confronting Plymouth. He led the attacks and was convinced it would soon fall. Jabe thought otherwise.

Maurice knew that despite being supplied by the navy, the town was short of men and ammunition: Royalist ships had done a good job harassing the supply vessels. He sent a message to the mayor offering a full pardon to everyone if he would surrender the town. There was no reply.

Jabe's lines of communication seemed as efficient as those of Prince Maurice and it was William's little friend that brought the news about the Scots. "It's true then," he said. "the bleddy Scots have joined up with Parliament."

William was unconvinced. "Don't be bleddy daft, why would they side with Parliament? They aren't going to fight their own King."

"Well you just remember where you heard it first. If your precious King hadn't been so bleddy stubborn they might have fought for him. He stirred them up and now they're out for revenge. It'll only make it harder for us."

Prince Maurice decided to keep the news from the ordinary soldiers but Jabe was less cautious about passing it on. When the news eventually broke it was that an army of 18,000 foot and 2,000 horse had moved into the north of England. In return, Parliament had agreed to include them in any peace settlement and to make a shift towards Presbyterianism.

In early December, Maurice led an attack on the east side of Plymouth. They moved up and attacked Lipson Work, at the end of the valley towards Plymouth.

As Jabe plodded through the marshes at the east end of the valley his mind went back to when he and William first met. The friendship had helped him through many encounters: they'd been inseparable but now he was on his own. William was back in camp nursing an injured foot.

They made little noise as they picked their way through the soft ground, only a few hours earlier it had been covered in water. It was treacherous but two locals, defectors from the town, were guiding them. Maurice had given orders that there was to be no talking. It was difficult for Jabe but the 'on pain of death' bit was persuasive. There would be plenty of time for talk when they reached Plymouth.

A few hours later he was back in camp recounting the battle to William. "Twas a bleddy disaster. We swept over their outpost but couldn't stop them raising the alarm. By the time we got to the end of the valley they were ready for us. They'd brought up more men from the town." The little man was right but they were only about 500 compared to Maurice's Army of 5,000. "Anyway, our guns opened up and we closed in. They wouldn't have stood a chance if we'd kept going but we didn't. Maurice made us shelter behind the hedges while he tried to get them to surrender."

“Reply did they?”

“They replied all right, with cannon fire. See, Maurice had given them time to get organised. If we’d attacked right away, we’d be in Plymouth by now, ravishing some of their lovely maids.”

“Instead of that you’re here keeping me company.”

“Yeah well, they’ll keep. Anyway, we moved up to the top of the hill and from there we could see more men coming up to join them. By now their guns were giving us hell. Next thing we knew they were charging towards us with muskets blazing. It seemed to us they were throwing their lives away but it wasn’t long before we realised that they weren’t that daft. Suddenly, we were being fired on from behind. A group of them had crept round the end of the ridge and we were trapped between two lots of fire.”

“So you had to fight your way out?”

“Fight be buggered. We ran as fast as we could, there was no thought of any more fighting. A lot of us were cut down as we headed back to the valley. Right behind us they were and there ahead of us was the marshland but it was different now, it was under water, the creek was flooded. We waded in but it was deeper than we thought and the mud was clinging, sucking us in. There were horses and men trying to pull themselves free and all the time the water was getting deeper. They who couldn’t move were drowned and others were shot or captured. Someone shouted my name and as I looked back, I could see it was one of the young boys. I stopped and I don’t know now if I’d have had the courage to try and help him but it was no good. One of our horses had been thrashing around, trying to get free, it rolled over onto him and he was gone. It was bloody terrible, a disaster. I can’t get the thought of it out of my mind.”

William nodded: he could do little else. His friend’s voice had been full of emotion and nothing he could say would remove the horror.

## Chapter 52

Any pleasure John Ennor took from the battles at Plymouth was soon dispelled as he heard the news of Pym’s death. His mother couldn’t resist a chuckle as she told him.

John Pym had been the Parliamentary political leader, a West Country member of Parliament and one of five men the King had tried to arrest in the House of Commons. When Sir John Eliot had died, he became the leader of the anti-King faction. It was Pym who’d laid the foundation of Parliament’s campaign. Now, like Sir John Eliot, he was dead. At first, John refused to believe her but as the news began to filter through from other sources, he knew it was true. Pym had been fighting two battles, one against the King and the other against a far stronger foe – cancer.

“Why would God allow it to happen?” John muttered to himself. It was a dreadful blow for Parliament.

“Never mind Boy,” gloated Joan, “it’s one less rebel to hang and it’s bound to shorten the war.”

Grief is always easier when shared but John had no one: he was among people who received the news with delight. Two local men had recently been killed fighting for the Royalists and any show of sympathy for John Pym was certain to invite revenge attacks. He walked to the river, it was peaceful there and he could think. Pym was his hero and now he was gone. Later that evening, as they prepared for bed, John’s sisters

asked why he was so quiet. "Has something happened to Father or Richard? Mother won't tell us: she says we won't understand."

"No, nothing like that, and she's right, you won't understand."

"Oh why won't anyone tell us anything?" complained Ruth, "just because we're girls."

### Chapter 53

William shook his head. "I've told you before, keep your bleddy voice down. You can't go 'round saying things like that. You'll get us shot."

"Well the man's a fool," complained Jabe. "We were lucky to get out of that last lot and here we go again. I tell you now, we aren't never going to take Plymouth. He's obsessed, tis as though his life depends on it."

"Obsessed or not, we got no choice. If he says attack then we attack."

The next attempt began with a heavy bombardment concentrated on Maudlyn Fort, part of the northern defensive line. William had recovered from his injury and was in the thick of it but the heavy enemy fire kept him pinned down and before long he heard the signal to retreat. They slouched back into camp. Jabe was at it again, griping about the tactics and criticising the leadership. He'd been warned by one of the officers to watch his tongue but it didn't stop him. "See, with its back to the sea it can last out for ever, now why can't he see that?"

William didn't disagree but he was fed up with the constant moaning. "Now come on, Maurice is no fool, he's just determined to make a breakthrough."

"You tell that to all the Cornish mothers who've lost their sons here. We've taken some beating, and for what? Bugger all."

It was true that the Royalist had achieved nothing. Maurice conferred with his officers and after a few days of inactivity he made the decision, he would lift the siege.

"There you are," said Jabe, "he should've listened to me in the first place. I can't wait to get away from here, I don't care where we're going, anywhere will do."

It was Christmas Day 1643 when Prince Maurice marched away from Plymouth. Jabe couldn't contain his frustration. "Why us, that's what I want to know. Why the hell do we have to stay here while that lot go off to enjoy themselves?"

William smiled. He didn't mind being left behind. It was a containing role they were to play. They had to stop the enemy foraging and of more importance, prevent any move against Cornwall.

Prince Maurice had taken four of the Old Cornish regiments, those commanded by John Grenville, Godolphin, Bassett and St Aubyn. They headed for Tavistock where they quartered against the worst of the winter. Colonel Digby was left with Mohun's regiment including William and Jabe. For the first time since the war started, the original five regiments wouldn't be fighting together.

## Chapter 54

In January 1644 the Scottish Army joined forces with its new allies and attacked the Marquis of Newcastle and his Popish army. Success came quickly and the Marquis fell back to York which was put under siege. Within a few days Nantwich also fell to Parliament.

York was an important city and King Charles ordered Prince Rupert to travel north to relieve it. He told him, "If York be lost, I shall esteem my crown little less..."

Back in August 1643, a Cornish soldier had landed at Liverpool and was immediately arrested on suspicion of being a Royalist. Sir Richard Grenville, Sir Bevil's brother, had been in Ireland fighting the rebels and it was unthinkable that he would be anything other than a Royalist.

Grenville protested and demanded to meet the Parliamentary leaders. In London, he insisted it had always been his intention to fight for Parliament. He'd fallen out with his late brother and had no intention of following him into the King's service. Doubts remained but he was known to be a good soldier and if what he said were true, then he would be a considerable asset to the Parliamentary cause.

Grenville was persuasive. A majority of the Parliamentary Committee accepted what he said and voted to employ him. A few sceptics remained but they were over-ruled and he was offered a commission as a lieutenant general of horse under Sir William Waller. He was made a member of the Council of War, given access to the Parliamentary plans for the summer and spring campaigns and, in March 1644, with a coach and six horses, a wagon, a troop of horse and £600, he left to join Waller.

The sceptics were proved correct and he immediately rode for Oxford to join the King. He took with him the troops, the money and the Parliamentary plans.

William chuckled when he heard. "They must be bleddy livid. It's cost them dear and serves them right. If he's anything like his brother then he'll do for me." In fact, he was nothing like his brother as many on both sides would soon find out.

The men of Parliament were furious. They declared him incapable of military employment and of all acquaintance and conversation with men of honesty and honour. Posters were put up proclaiming him a traitor, a rogue and a villain. He was hanged in effigy and dubbed Skellum Grenville.

Within two weeks of leaving London, Grenville was in Devon. He'd been welcomed by the King and given a commission under Prince Maurice. Apart from his military ambitions, he'd a few personal matters to settle, he was a man intent on revenge. His marriage had been a disaster and had ended in a bitter divorce that had cost him dear. The blame was laid at the feet of his wife's lawyer and from his new position of military power, he accused him of being a spy and had him hanged. His reputation for cynical brutality was already being confirmed.

The Cornish had lost many leaders, men who'd melded them into a fighting force. Now another Cornishman was to lead them and despite his reputation, many were persuaded to join his 'New Cornish Tertia' or, as he preferred to call it, 'The Army for the county of Cornwall.' It quickly became known as 'Sir Richard Grenville's Creatures' and comprised four regiments: one led by Grenville himself and the other three by John Arundell, Richard Arundell and Lewis Tremain. In mid-March he took his new force to join Digby outside Plymouth.

## Chapter 55

“Well what do you reckon to Sir Bevil’s brother?” but before William could answer he added, “I wonder where our lot have gone to?”

William shook his head. “Now which question do you want me to answer?”

“Well I just wondered. Only it’s strange without the other regiments around.”

“Well, I hear they’ve left Tavistock for east Devon, to put down a commotion there. The big fellow over there, the one with only half an ear, he said they’re going to sort out the bastards at Lyme.”

“Lyme, where’s that?”

“You know where it is. We knocked on their door on the way back from Bristol but they wouldn’t come out.”

“Hell, that’s some bleddy way.”

“Now aren’t you glad we stayed behind.”

Jabe grunted. “Spose so. Here, that fellow you were saying about, the one with only half an ear, he reckons any Irish taken prisoner are being put to the sword, just because they’re Irish.”

“There you are then,” said William. “Aren’t you glad you decided to be Welsh and as far as Grenville’s concerned, I think he’s a hard man but he’s Cornish and he’ll do for me.”

Sir Richard Grenville wasn’t happy serving under Sir John Digby and made no secret that he wanted a command of his own. In June, fate played a hand and Colonel Digby was injured as he led yet another attack on Plymouth. He was unable to continue and Grenville took over the siege. He was now in command of his new army and Mohun’s regiment. William and Jabe had a Cornish commander again.

Grenville set up his headquarters at Fitzford near Tavistock. He began his new regime. The town of Plymouth would come to rue the name of Sir Richard Grenville.

With water on three sides, Plymouth was reasonably safe from raids from the south, west and east. Any approach from there would be slow and exposed to fire from St Nicholas Island and the town itself. The obvious point of attack was from the north but the fortifications on that side were formidable. Many of the 8,000 civilians had helped build a new line of forts. Positioned well outside the existing walls, they lessened the effect of cannon fire. The Royalists held Plympton and the other side of the Tamar, at Saltash and Mount Edgecumbe. Their guns trained on Parliamentary positions. St Nicholas Island, in the middle of the Sound, was in Parliamentary hands. It controlled the passage of shipping in and out of the town. The Sound was wide, too wide for land-based cannon to have any effect.

“He’s like a man possessed,” said Jabe. “He’s worse than Maurice.”

“It’s what drives him, makes him a good commander. He wants to show he can take it where others have failed. I reckon he’s the man to do it, too.”

Colonel Gould, Governor of Plymouth, read the note from Grenville. It urged him to surrender and warned that if he refused then he would be responsible for the huge loss of life.

Over the next four months there were many attacks but as before, there was little to show for it. Then, in May, Plymouth's Governor went on the offensive. He sent a force across the Tamar to try and take Mount Edgecumbe and Millbrook. He didn't succeed but it was a massive shock to Grenville and a boost to morale in Plymouth. The town seemed capable of soaking up everything the Royalists could throw at it and Grenville became increasingly frustrated. Despite the failures however, he still believed the breakthrough would come. Jabe didn't share his optimism.

"I still reckon he can do it," said William. "We just need more men."

Jabe scoffed. "We had plenty when Maurice was here and what difference did it make."

William was not in the mood for an argument and he closed his eyes for a few minutes sleep but the sound of shouting soon woke him. He stood up and wandered over to see what it was all about. As he pushed his way through the crowd, he could see Jabe being pummelled by one man while being held by another. A few were trying to stop it but others were keen to watch the fun. It was not completely one-sided and as the man pulled his arm back to deliver another blow, Jabe kicked out and the bully doubled over clutching his crotch. The other man spotted William. He released Jabe and tried to run but the crowd pushed him back. Both attackers were now on their feet and being held by William as Jabe swung at them again and again. For a small man he packed quite a punch. "Right," shouted William, "that's enough. I think they understand Cornish justice." With that he dragged them over to a boggy patch of land and threw them in, it was where the latrines discharged.

"Now what started that?" asked William.

"No idea. He just went for me."

"Stir him up did you?"

Jabe looked a bit sheepish. "Well, I may have said something about the King. I think I mentioned that with a Scottish father, a Danish mother and a French wife, he was about as English as my little finger."

William shook his head. "I wish I was here when it started."

"Thanks Will."

"Don't thank me, I'd have joined in on their side."

Jabe laughed. "Touchy lot you Royalists."

The days passed with no progress. The attacks had slowed and both sides had time to rest and pass the time with idle chatter.

"Here," said Jabe.

"Yea, what now?"

"That bloke, the one I aren't supposed to ask you about. He don't seem too bad to me."

"Spoke to him have you?" asked William.

"Well, only to pass the time of day. Anyway, he reckons he don't know you."

"I didn't say he did."

"But you said you don't like him. I mean, if you've never met him what harm's he done you."

"I never said he'd done me no harm. It's just that...well he's from the other side of the river."

"What, from Devon?"

"No you bleddy fool, the other side of our river, he's from Perran." Jabe looked confused.

"Perran...Perranzabuloe," said William.

"So?"

"Well, where I'm from we don't talk to they buggers."

"You mean that's what this is all about? You're from one side of the river and he's from the other and you don't talk to each other?" William said nothing. "My God, this bit of trouble with Parliament is nothing compared to your problems."

## Chapter 56

"Well Mr Ennor, what news of our friend Prowse?" Sitting astride his horse, Tregonning towered over him. "Mr Treleigh's becoming impatient to settle this matter and he's beginning to question your endeavours."

"I've little news I'm afraid, except that the man seems to have a deep hatred for your employer."

"I'd remind you he's also your employer. You shouldn't forget that. Now, tell me exactly what you've heard."

John's neck was beginning to ache and apart from that, Tregonning irritated him. "Well, he's been spreading stories among Treleigh's tenants, encouraging them to withhold their rent."

"Has he by God. The man's a fool, doesn't he know who he's up against."

"I think he does. He says Treleigh killed his father and he's determined to ruin him or die in the process."

"Then we won't disappoint him but first I must report back. Do nothing till you hear from me."

Tregonning rode off up the hill. Since the last meeting, John had learned a lot about the Treleighs. They were ruthless and would stop at nothing to get whatever they wanted. Rebecca Treleigh spent much of her time with the leading Royalist families, raising money for the King's Army.

## Chapter 57

"Both coming are they?" Jabe had heard that Queen Henrietta Maria was heading their way and he wondered if the King was coming with her. She was heavily pregnant and had left Oxford to escape the Earl of Essex. She'd made for Bristol and from there to Exeter.



“Can’t see the King letting her go without him,” said William. There again, he’s got a war to fight. They reckon Parliament wouldn’t give her free passage and they’re worried they’ll try and capture her. That bastard Essex wouldn’t think twice about using her as a hostage.”

The Earl of Essex was actually on his way to Lyme, to force Prince Maurice to lift the siege. He’d defied orders and headed there despite being told to leave it to William Waller. From Lyme he proposed to continue to the west to relieve Plymouth. His Parliamentary masters were livid but there was little they could do.

The siege had been hard on the people. Most of the houses in Lyme were damaged and even the women fought at the barricades. The people hated the soldiers ranged against them, particularly the Irish and the Cornish. Any captured were immediately hanged or tied back-to-back and their throats cut. News of the relieving army increased their appetite for revenge and the Cornish regiments had suffered some terrible losses.

Now, with Essex’s huge army marching towards them, Maurice had no choice. On the 15<sup>th</sup> June, he lifted the siege and retreated to the west.

## **Chapter 58**

### **Taunton Lost**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> June, at Exeter, the Queen gave birth to her ninth child, Princess Henrietta Anne. Prince Maurice went to meet his new cousin.

The Earl of Essex moved along the coast from Lyme to take Weymouth and Bridport but garrisoning the captured towns was a problem, it was stretching his resources and he had to enlist more men as he progressed.

The people of Plymouth went about their lives with an increased feeling of hope. They’d heard of Essex’s progress and knew the Royalists could do little about it. He’d promised to save their town and they had every reason to believe that he would.

The Royalists outside the town walls had also heard. To them it was a major threat and as ever, Jabe played the pessimist. “They reckon he’s got 10,000 men and I tell you now, I aren’t waiting ‘round to count them. When they gets too close, I’m off home, even if I’ve gotta swim across that bleddy river. They say Taunton’s lost: it’ll be Exeter next and then us.”

William tried to find some good news to counteract the moans but there just wasn’t any. In early July the Parliamentarians had captured Taunton. The Royalists had held out for a week until Sergeant Major William Reeve decided that continued resistance was pointless. Unfortunately for him, that was not how his commanders saw it and he was charged with surrendering too early and sentenced to death. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Blake of Lyme was appointed the new Parliamentary Governor.

The loss of Taunton was a huge blow to the Royalists and when the Earl of Essex arrived, he was given a hero’s welcome. “The buggers are jumping onto the winning side,” said William. “The more he wins, the more they flock to him.”

“Can’t really blame them for that,” replied Jabe, “they did the same with us.”

“Yeah, but that was for the King, not this lot of bleddy rebels.” Jabe looked perplexed.

News that Essex and his huge army was approaching sent ripples of fear through the Royalists at Exeter. The capture of the city would be a devastating blow and if the Queen were to be taken prisoner she would undoubtedly be used as a bargaining tool. Henrietta Maria had no choice: she couldn't allow herself to be captured. She left her new daughter at Exeter and headed for Cornwall. It had been a terrible decision for any mother to make.

“Well I hope Maurice is up to it,” said Jabe. “He's the only thing tween us and Essex and if he can't stop him, we don't stand a chance.”

“He can't,” replied William. “The best he can do is to delay him. Essex will either take Exeter or pass it by and head for here.”

“Well if he heads this way I'll be long gone. I'll find a hidey hole down Penryn and stay there till this lot blows over.”

William smiled. “It better be well stocked with food: you could be there a while.”

“Food! I'm more worried about sneaking the women in. Fancy joining me do you?”

Essex moved on towards Tavistock. He knew that Exeter could hold out for some time and he decided that it would have to wait. The rescue of Plymouth took priority over everything.

Grenville was convinced that Plymouth was close to surrender. To stand a chance against Essex, he had to get inside the town walls quickly. He increased the attacks and any enemy soldiers or townspeople caught foraging outside the walls received little mercy. Two men caught looking for food were brought before him. Grenville taunted them and then forced one to hang the other. The executioner then followed him to the gallows. Grenville took pleasure in dispensing justice as harshly as martial law would allow and his mocking cruelty sickened many, even in his own army. Despite his efforts, the defences held firm and with the Parliamentary Army approaching, he knew it would be only a matter of days before he would have to lift the siege.

## Chapter 59

### The Battle of Cropredy Bridge

Louisa walked out of Stratton Church, her newly baptized baby daughter in her arms. Her mind went back to when she and Richard had married, a lovely day, just over a year ago. She thought too of his funeral. She'd not known him for long but there had been an intense love between them, not everyone finds that. The little girl had his looks and one day she would take her to see his parents.

Richard had died from the wound in his chest, it seemed likely that the musket shot had moved and entered his heart. He was buried at Stratton, near to the border he would forever guard.

At Witney, on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1644, Lord Hopton merged his army with the King's and a few days later they clashed with Sir William Waller at Cropredy Bridge. William Ennor heard the outcome with some pleasure: it had been a crushing victory for the King. The Parliamentarians had suffered heavy casualties and many of the survivors had deserted. Waller's Army had been badly weakened and in a letter to Parliament he ranted about his men, particularly those under Major General Browne who, he claimed, were only fit for a

gallows here and a hell hereafter. Critically, Waller had failed to stop the King who now headed to the west, to deal with the Earl of Essex.

Starved of good news, William punched the air. "It's up to us to give Essex a right Cornish welcome. All we gotta do is hold him till the King gets here."

"Is that all," replied Jabe. "No worries there then."

## Chapter 60

The Queen was making slow progress but as she crossed the border and entered Cornwall, she felt safe. The strain of travelling the deplorable roads was taking its toll and it was a pathetic figure that passed through Launceston. She pined for the baby she'd left at Exeter and lamented the fate of her husband. At Truro she paused to write to him.

*My dear heart,*

*This letter is to bid you Adieu. If the wind is favourable I shall set off tomorrow. Henry Seymour will tell you many things from me, which the miserable condition I am in does not permit me to write. I am giving you the strongest proof of love that I can. I am hazarding my life that I may not incommode your affairs. Adieu my dear heart. If I die, believe that you will lose a person who has never been other than entirely yours, and who by her affection has deserved that you shall not forget her.*

After resting, she continued her journey to Pendennis from where she boarded a Flemish man-of-war and set sail for France. A fleet of vessels accompanied her including a fast galley of sixteen oars, for use in case of emergency. It was a precarious journey. The Parliamentarians were prepared for an escape attempt and had set a guard of three war-ships at the entrance to Falmouth Haven. They opened fire on the Royal fleet but it escaped and landed at Brest. Her efforts to help the Royalist cause would continue from France.

## Chapter 61

"Grenville's right," declared William. "If Essex had any sense he'd have turned round and had a go at the King. He could've trapped him 'tween him and Waller."

"It would've kept him off our backs," said Jabe.

"Trouble is, he wasn't never going to do that. He'll rescue Plymouth and then he'll head for Cornwall."

Parliament had a much clearer picture of events. Sir William Waller was not moving fast enough to overtake the King and despite his huge army, Essex was in danger of being caught. He'd stretched his supply lines to breaking point and his soldiers were forced to pillage the countryside: the communities were in panic.

Both sides had been guilty of plunder, perhaps the Royalists were the worst, but the King knew that he was moving towards an area passionate in its support for him and he threatened his soldiers with swift justice if they were caught stealing. In spite of that, some couldn't resist what they'd done so freely in the past and when they were brought before him, they received swift justice. They were taken out to the hedgerow and hauled off their feet to die an agonising death: a salutary lesson to the others as they marched passed the swinging bodies.

## Chapter 62

In mid-July most of the Royalist soldiers blockading Plymouth were given orders to move north to link up with Maurice's Army; a move which re-united the Old Cornish regiments. Prince Maurice needed more men to confront Essex, to help bring him to battle before he could reach the Tamar. The siege at Plymouth was now of secondary importance and would have to be held by Richard Grenville's new regiments. As they marched north, William looked forward to meeting up with friends from the other old Cornish regiments and to hear their stories from Lyme and Exeter.

William and Jabe were eating when a group of new troops wandered in. He nodded in their direction, "I wonder where they're from." They were from Cornwall. Joseph Jane and Francis Basset had managed to persuade about 1,500 men to join Prince Maurice: they'd convinced them that the best defence was to fight the enemy before it reached the border.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> July the King was at Bath, unaware that the Queen had escaped and that his cause had suffered a severe setback at Marston Moor. When news of the defeat arrived, he was distraught. William Ennor looked grim as he heard the news. It was the most devastating defeat of the war so far. "Four thousand men," he said, "We've lost other battles but this...it's terrible."

The following day the King marched to Mells in Somerset where he hanged two more of his men for plundering. They seemed unwilling to learn.

Prince Maurice had been ordered to take no action against Essex until the King joined him but reports suggested that he was still about three days' march away.

William was frustrated. "Tid'n that I want to take him on but this don't make no sense. Essex will sort out Grenville and then he'll head for Cornwall. And we're doing bugger-all about it. We should be moving out now, before he gets any closer. By the time the King gets here it'll be too late."

Jabe shook his head. "Well we aren't going to change nothing. Maurice won't go against what he's been told." In exasperation he said, "Anyway, I'm off to talk to the women in the baggage train."

There were a few laughs and William said, "You never give up. They told you before that you're so small you should've been thrown back."

Jabe called back over his shoulder. "Yeah, well they don't know what they're missing. I'm the best stag in Penryn."

## Chapter 63

John had heard about Marston Moor and of the approach of Essex. He was delighted but he had to take care. Only a week before, the home of a suspected Parliamentary supporter had been stoned. Feelings were running high and rumour alone was enough to enflame a mob.

It was a hot day and he was busy in the field, grateful for the jug of ale Catherine had brought. She sat beside him. Talking always came easily to them but this time she wanted a favour. "I've asked Mother a dozen times if I can start seeing Matthew James but she says I'm too young. Will you plead for me?"

“Now come on Cath, do you really think she’d take any notice of me? You know she hates my guts. It would make her more likely to say no.”

“Then I shall leave home and go to live with him,” she replied haughtily.

John frowned. “Are you sure about him?”

“Of course I’m sure. I’ll call to see him on my way home.” Then, in a subdued voice, she said, “You won’t tell Mother will you?”

John laughed, “Come on Cath, you know I’d never do anything to hurt you.”

He watched as she walked back across the field, despite her being his sister he felt a pang of jealousy. It was a strange feeling and he knew it was wrong. He was busy pulling weeds and only looked up when he heard the sound of an approaching horse. “Good day Mr Ennor, that sister of yours is really quite charming.”

“Mr Treleigh, I...I didn’t hear you. Where’s Tregonning?”

“He’s off at the war, no doubt where you’ll be going shortly but first, I’ve one more job for you. It concerns your friend Thomas Prowse. Your last bit of news disturbed me, I fear that the man is beginning to meddle too deeply in my affairs.”

“So, what am I supposed to do about it?” snapped John.

Treleigh stared at him. “Watch your tongue Mr Ennor, just remember who you are addressing. First, you’re to spread the rumour that he’s a spy for Parliament. His connection with the priest was suspected so the news will fall on eager ears. Secondly, and I hope that you are up to this, he must end up in a shaft, the actual means of despatch I leave to you.”

“You ask too much: I won’t do it.”

Treleigh was not used to being spoken to in such a manner and he raised his whip but, out there, well away from any help, he thought better of it. “I think you need reminding that I have a considerable hold over you. Your friend the priest, your dabbling in politics and, of course, that charming sister of yours, it’s time her fruit was plucked.”

John’s anger increased. “If you touch her, I’ll kill you.”

“I think not, but just remember it’s in your hands. Here, take this as part payment, the rest will be yours when I receive news that Thomas Prowse will no longer trouble me.” He threw some coins on the ground and rode back the way he’d come.

John cursed him but bent to pick up the money. He hated what he’d been asked to do. Perhaps he could warn Prowse, convince him to run away, to join the war. He could then tell Treleigh that he was out of reach. He stood thinking: it was some time before he started work again.

A few days later he was near the cottage when he heard raised voices. He ran to the door and pushed it open but was unprepared for what he saw. Cath was naked and being fussed around by her mother and grandmother. Ruth was sitting on a stool, crying. In front of the fire was a tub, clearly awaiting the contents of the cauldron.

Catherine was facing his way, her hands cupped over her face. She made no attempt to hide her body. He'd not seen her without clothes for many years and his male instincts took over: he couldn't look away.

"Get out boy, this is no place for you," the old woman hissed.

"What's wrong? I won't leave till you tell me."

It was Ruth who spoke, "She's been raped, Catherine's been raped."

John stood there, not knowing what to do.

"Go Boy, give the girl some privacy."

"Then tell me who it was, I must know his name."

"Isn't it obvious," shouted his mother. "It was that boy, Matthew James, he's besotted with her."

"Cath, is that right, was it him?"

"Catherine didn't reply, she was totally oblivious, silenced by shock."

John grabbed the old sword from the wall and headed for the door: he would find Matthew James and kill him.

The slamming of the door jolted Catherine back to her senses and she shouted, "No John." He was too far away to hear. She turned in desperation. "Ruth, run after him: tell him it wasn't Matthew. It was that man with the white horse."

Ruth caught up with him as he entered the farmstead of Elijah James. She shouted, "John, you're wrong, it was someone else."

Matthew stood facing him, pitchfork in hand. "Have you come to settle something John Ennor, if so then I'm ready."

Elijah moved forward and stood between them, daring either of them to move.

"Matthew, I'm sorry, I...I thought..." stammered John.

"John, I'm taking you home," said Ruth. "I'm sorry Matthew, this is nothing to do with you."

But Matthew wanted to know. "Is it Catherine, what's happened to her?"

John didn't know whether or not to tell him. Eventually he shook his head, "No, she's fine Matthew, she's fine. I...I'm sorry..."

Elijah and Matthew watched them go, John leaning on Ruth for support.

"What the hell was that about?" asked Elijah.

"I don't know, I think his mind has gone."

## Chapter 64

News reached Prince Maurice that the Earl of Essex had reached Tavistock.

“Then what the hell are we doing here?” demanded Jabe. “We should be there, facing him. I don’t give a bugger about Plymouth but next thing he’ll be over the river. I don’t reckon your King gives a damn about Cornwall.”

It made sense. It looked as though the Royalist leaders were prepared to sacrifice Cornwall. William confronted one of the officers. “We’ve opened the bleddy door,” he shouted. “The only thing between him and Cornwall is Grenville and he can’t stop him.” He expected a sharp rebuke but the officer was a Cornishman.

Essex took great pleasure in attacking Grenville’s headquarters at Fitzford. There were just 150 men garrisoned there and faced with such a huge army, they quickly surrendered. The Irish among them were butchered and Essex’s only disappointment was that Skellum Grenville hadn’t been with them. From Fitzford he headed for Plymouth, Lord Robartes at his side, determined to push on into Cornwall once Plymouth had been relieved.

Grenville would stand no chance against such a large force but that was not his only concern. Once they knew that Essex was nearby, the defenders at Plymouth would be on him. He crossed the Tamar and headed for Horsebridge where he would try to hold the enemy until Prince Maurice made his move.

There were huge celebrations in Plymouth as Grenville withdrew and as the Parliamentary Army came into sight, most were convinced it signalled the end of the war. Essex had delivered his promise and now he would enjoy the praise. Yes, he’d defied his political masters but he’d relieved Plymouth.

For Lord Robartes, the job remained unfinished. He continued to remind Essex that Cornwall had to be rescued from the Royalists and assured him that the people would flock to his side. Essex needed little persuasion. He’d already declared his intention to clear the country of Cornwall and to settle it in peace. First though, he wanted to savour his success.

When he left Plymouth, he took with him 2,000 men from the garrison. After all, they were no longer needed there. With an army of over 10,000 men he headed north along the east bank of the Tamar, until he reached Horsebridge. Grenville’s men were waiting, it was where they’d expected him to cross. The Parliamentarians took up their position on the Devon side of the bridge and prepared to attack.

Grenville himself was in Launceston with the bulk of his army. His numbers had increased slightly: 300 troopers from the Queen’s Regiment of Horse had joined him. It was a somewhat unholy alliance – Grenville’s men and the Queen’s so-called “Beastly Bugging Frenchmen.”

## Chapter 65

### The Earl of Essex Enters Cornwall

A few days later, Maurice broke camp and headed for Crediton. “About bleddy time,” said Jabe. “All the same I aren’t lookin’ forward to meeting up with that bleddy great army.”

“I shouldn’t start worrying,” said William. “Look at the sun, we’re heading the wrong way.”

There were shouts from the Cornish and Maurice told his officers to single out any troublemakers. William was pulled aside and told to shut up or suffer the consequences. “It’s all very well for you,” he shouted, “I’ve got family down there. Why the hell are we letting him into Cornwall while we’re bugging around up here?”

“I’ve told you soldier, shut your mouth or you’ll find yourself swinging from a tree.”

A few shouts of, “You just try it,” was enough to unnerve the officer and William returned to the ranks, chastened but seething.

There were now about 1,500 Cornish in Maurice’s command: 400 in Thomas Bassett’s regiment, 200 with John Grenville, 400 with Thomas St Aubyn and 500 under William Godolphin. Mohun’s regiment of 600 men were a part of Henry Carey’s tertia. Digby was still injured and the teenager, Sir Chichester Wrey, was in command. As they entered Crediton, William mumbled, “This wouldn’t have happened under Hopton. They’re still hurting from when we kicked their ass at Stratton and now when they come back at us, we’re running away.”

The Parliamentary press portrayed the Cornish as a different race: they called them near-savages with their own strange language: barbarous commoners, heathens and uncivilized roughnecks with no respect for common decency and civilized behaviour. “Clever words,” said Jabe. “It won’t sound half so funny with a pike up their ass.”

For Essex, Cornwall was an important strategic target but for Robartes, its capture would deliver a personal promise. It would enable him to reclaim his Lanhydrock estate. Now, they were just a short ride from achieving their aims but there was a problem. Essex’s supply line was now non-existent and Parliament feared that his army would be cut off and trapped. They’d ordered him not to enter Cornwall but as before, they were powerless to stop him. Instead, they urged Waller to make more speed but his losses at Cropredy Bridge had weakened him to such an extent that only the most optimistic thought that he would be able to catch the King, let alone defeat him.

The Earl of Essex was oblivious to the problem, he was sure that Waller would overtake the King before he could pose a threat. Nothing was going to stop him taking Cornwall.

The action at Horsebridge was brief. It was an unequal battle and Grenville’s force was quickly overwhelmed. There were 200 Royalist dead and many more captured. Essex suffered about 40 or 50 casualties. The action hardly delayed him and with the main Royalist force some miles away, Robert Devereux, the third Earl of Essex, led his large army across the bridge and into Cornwall.

## Chapter 66

William watched as the King’s Army made its way towards them: his frustration now gave way to excitement. Very soon he would catch sight of his monarch, perhaps have the chance to kneel at his feet. It stirred his innermost feelings. John would make some clever jibe if he were here – Richard too if he had lived. Although his elder son had fought for the Royalists, he’d little respect for the King. He was not too sure about Jabe, he’d made a few comments that wouldn’t go down too well in Royalist circles but that was Jabe the joker. He meant no harm. William strained his neck to look inside the King’s carriage.



After he'd rested, Charles Stuart took command of the combined army, about 16,000 men. "Enough to give the Earl a bloody nose," boasted William.

"Providing we can catch him before he gets to Cornwall," replied Jabe, unaware that he was already there.

The Cornish soldiers watched as Charles knighted three of their number: Henry Carey, Thomas Bassett and Joseph Wagstaffe. The show of respect for their countrymen was appreciated.

The Earl of Essex looked solemn as he rode through the lanes of Cornwall. The reception was not what he expected. His irritation was obvious as he reminded Robartes of his promise. A few men had joined them but fear of conscription had driven most from their homes. Only the women and children watched as they passed – a few jeered. Children gripped their mother's skirts and looked at the soldiers with frightened eyes. There were shouts of "English scum" and one woman screamed, "You bastard Robartes." Before she could be identified she'd dived for cover behind her friends. A stone struck a trooper who turned on the boy who threw it. The reaction was meant to frighten rather than hurt but the boy ran the wrong way and was bowled over. He was unharmed but the women picked up whatever they could find and hurled it at the rider. The situation escalated and the other troopers rode straight at them. They scampered in all directions. One rider grabbed a girl and pulled her onto his horse. He rode off laughing while the other troopers closed to protect him from the screaming crowd. The women scattered in terror but one of theirs had been taken and they were not about to give up on her. They ran through the fields to keep up with the trooper who'd slung her across his horse. Every so often he pulled up her clothes and smacked her bare backside to further enflame the women. As they rode through a small stream, he threw her into the water but not before he'd groped her. "Here," he shouted to the chasing women, "she needs a good wash before I'd have her."

There was little resistance as they entered Bodmin. Essex ordered a halt and they set up camp. Once again, few came to support him.

The shout that Essex had entered Cornwall was met with jeers and curses. The anger was not restricted to the enemy. "I just can't believe it," said Jabe. "We stood by and let him pass. Now he's camped at Bodmin while Grenville's scurrying away like a frightened rabbit."

"Well what would you do?" asked William, "with an army of 10,000 chasing you? Anyway, if anyone's to blame, it's Maurice, he had us sitting on our backsides while Essex rode by."

"Either him or your precious King," replied Jabe.

Grenville made his way to Truro where he began to strengthen his force. From there he made for Penryn. His army was in disarray, weakened by losses at Horsebridge and by desertions. News that Essex was in Cornwall with a huge army had done little to help recruitment: no one wanted to join a lost cause. Deserters were a different matter and he spent most of his time tracking them down. It was their choice, fight or the rope!

## Chapter 67

John Ennor gripped his sword and bit into a biscuit, it was all he could find as he slipped out of the cottage. He was on his way to Plymouth to join the Parliamentary defenders. Getting through the Royalist siege would be difficult but he would face that problem when he arrived. As he approached Bodmin he could see a large gathering: he guessed it was an army. He asked one of the locals and was told it was the Earl of Essex and his Parliamentary pigs.

He was delighted, it was his chance to help rescue Cornwall. The timing was perfect but that was down to good fortune. He'd always intended joining the war but it was only when James Treleigh lay dead at his feet that he'd decided that the time was right. To delay would've brought the authorities to his door: he would receive no mercy for killing such a distinguished Royalist. There had been time to return to the cottage to tell Catherine she was safe. Time enough too, for a visit to Jenefer. It was an emotional farewell. They talked of their feelings for each other and made love in their special place down by the river.

Now, two days later, he was in Bodmin and soon he would be fighting for Parliament. He approached one of the guards. His voice was firm, unwavering, as he said, "I'm here to offer my services to Parliament and the Earl of Essex."

"And who might you be," was the blunt reply from an officer who'd been watching him.

"I'm John Ennor, a Cornishman who wants to strike a blow for freedom."

"That sounds like a well-rehearsed line Boy. Is that what they told you to say?"

"Told me? No one has told me to say anything: it's what I want to do."

"There are few enough of your countrymen that come to join us and when one scraggy boy arrives offering to fight, I get suspicious. You know what I reckon? That you're a spy sent here by Charles Stuart. What do you say to that?"

Before John could reply, another soldier joined in. "I reckon you're right Captain. He's no good to us, we should hang him just to be on the safe side."

John was bewildered. Did they mean it or were they making sport of him? "No wait," he shouted, "I'm no spy. I'm from these parts. I can be of help to you."

The officer laughed. "You? You'll be no good to us. Shall we hang him lads or send him home to his mother?"

"Let him be," shouted another officer, "we need all the friends we can get in this Godforsaken place." He was more senior and the others stepped back.

Annoyed at being made to look a fool the captain said, "We'll be watching you Boy, anything suspicious and you'll be dangling from a tree."

John's speech was a mixture of Cornish and English, it left them in no doubt where he was from. At mealtime few spoke to him and his rations were smaller than the others: it was not the welcome he'd expected.

News that the King's Army was at Lifton and about to cross into Cornwall occupied his mind. Bodmin was as good a place as any for a fight but it concerned him that it could be against his father.

## Chapter 68

Ahead of the Royalist Army was Poulson Bridge. "Now that's some 'ansome sight," said William. "I was beginning to think we wouldn't see Cornwall again."

Jabe grunted his agreement. "Be nice if we could stay a while: after we've dealt with the rebels."

"Missing Penryn are you?" laughed William. "Grenville's probably down there now, getting to know your women."

The Royalist Army crossed into Cornwall and camped at Launceston, the King in a large house and his men in a nearby field. William slept well, being back on Cornish soil made him feel closer to Ann. When he awoke, Jabe was already up and jabbering away about something. William rubbed his eyes and asked, "What's up Boy, run out of food have we?"

"They've caught a spy: he was trying to cross the bridge." The man had been taken before the King for questioning but he could tell them little apart from he had been heading for London with a letter from the Earl of Essex. As the interrogation ended, he hoped for release but he was taken out to the hedgerow and hanged.

As they marched away William nodded in the direction of his swinging body. "Poor bugger, hell of a punishment for carrying a letter."

The King's arrival in Cornwall was the boost Grenville needed. The chance to fight for their monarch encouraged many to join.

## Chapter 69

### To Lostwithiel and Fowey

With the chasing army just 20 miles away, Essex cursed Waller. He made no secret of his belief that his lack of progress was due to the quarrel over who should lead the Southwest campaign. Despite the threat, he still thought he could win in Cornwall but he needed a contingency plan. He gave orders to move out. They were to head south, to Lostwithiel. From there they could escape through the Port of Fowey if it became necessary.

John marched beside a lad little older than himself. The boy told him that he'd joined with his father and that they'd fought together. He'd no idea where. "It was in one of the big battles," he said. "My father fell to the cavalry. The pikemen should have protected them but the horse broke through and he was killed. He was so badly trampled that I couldn't recognise him."

"I'm sorry," said John, "I've a father and brother fighting with the Royalists but I've no idea where they are."

The lad looked confused. "So you fight against them."

John paused, "I hope I won't have to. What's your name?"

"Frederick Mann," replied the boy. "I've heard them call you John. I've never met a Cornishman before."

"Did you expect me to have two heads," joked John.

Frederick didn't laugh. "We've been told things about the Cornish. They say you're different, foreigners, like the French and Irish."

John shrugged his shoulders. "There's some truth in that. We're Celts, not Anglo-Saxon like you. We've all been mixed up over the years but there's no denying we're different. So what else have they told you?"

"That you're rebellious."

John laughed, "Probably right about that, none more so. Anyway, what made you join?"

Frederick hesitated, as if he'd not considered the question before. "I wish I knew. I'm not even sure my father knew. We were pressed into it and now I've lost him and marched the length of the country for a cause which I don't understand."

"Do you have any other family?"

"I have a mother and a girlfriend but whether she'll wait I don't know."

"Me too," said John, "I have my Jenefer. We'll talk later."

As they passed through the hamlets, the soldiers taunted the people. They made fun of their appearance and asked if they'd seen Skellum Grenville running that way. Sir Bevil Grenville had been well thought of, even by the Parliamentary leaders, but what they would give to see his brother on the end of a rope.

The women jeered but it only invited more abuse and two soldiers at the rear pointed and laughed at the angry faces. One of them shouted, "Did you see that woman, tits like an angel and face like an ox."

"Her mother was probably crossed with a donkey," replied the other man, "We'll ask Cornish boy when we stop."

It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> August when they reached Lostwithiel. Essex set up his headquarters and the main body of infantry swarmed through the little town taking over the houses and whatever shelter they could find. Most of the cavalry and the remainder of the infantry formed a defensive ring around the town, in the houses, the castle and in the surrounding hills. Essex knew that the main threat was from the east but Skellum Grenville was to the west and although he despised him, he knew he was a determined soldier.

As long as Essex controlled the high ground around the town he was in a strong position. If the King attacked he would wipe him out. Of equal importance was the river, he had to keep the sea route open, to maintain contact with the Parliamentary fleet. He sent a detachment to the port of Fowey and just as at Lostwithiel, they took over the best houses and set up gunnery positions beside the river.

John looked at the despairing faces of the Lostwithiel folk and he feared for their safety. The women dragged their children off the streets and the old men looked sullen, aware that resistance was hopeless. He watched as the vicar approached one of the Parliamentary leaders and as he tried to protest, they goaded him. They'd little respect for men of the Church.

Essex's Army now occupied the towns of Lostwithiel and Fowey. They held both sides of the Fowey River, Boconnoc House, Lanhydrock House and Restormel Castle. They guarded Respryn Bridge and were spread out on the surrounding hills including the imposing Beacon Hill. An advance group on Druids' Hill were well placed to sound the alarm if they were attacked from the north. Restormel Castle, about a mile to the north of Lostwithiel, was little more than a ruin but it was in a key position. The river split Essex's forces but he held a good defensive line, each position crucial to the others.

Lostwithiel was a bustling little town, home to about 400 people. It was set in a valley and straddled the Fowey River. John had been told it had once been the most important town in Cornwall, the seat of Cornish government and the only place permitted to receive tin. The Great Hall, a range of thirteenth-century buildings, housed the Stannary Court and jail. Part of it was already in a bad state but it stood as a symbol of Cornishness.

The townspeople had known of Essex's approach but they couldn't have imagined the horror about to befall them. They remembered the fighting just up the road, at Braddock Down, but that was some time ago, surely it couldn't still be going on. Some, on the remote farms, didn't even know they were at war. That would now change.

"So John, are you going to tell me what I'm fighting for?" All the houses were occupied but John and Frederick had managed to find cover in a cowshed. It stank but there was straw to lie on and a roof over their heads. Frederick continued. "They say the King's a tyrant whatever that means. What I can't understand is why it led to war."

John paused: his thoughts went back to the time spent in the priest's study. Now, he was the teacher and he had to do his best to convince his pupil. "You see Frederick, it's all about who should make the laws and run the country. We say that it's Parliament that should set the taxes and decide where to spend them. Yes, it's partly about religion but there's more to it than that. It's a power struggle between the King and his Parliament with neither side prepared to give in."

"But if it's not about religion then why are we all Puritans?" asked Frederick.

"Most Puritans fight for Parliament," said John, "but not all. Some keep out of it and some even fight for the other side. What you've got to understand is that the King is evil. He uses us for his own ends, takes us to war against our will and spends our taxes on his selfish pleasures. He says he's appointed by God but I don't believe it. He's a man just like you and me." John was in full flow, unaware that his animated conversation had travelled beyond the flimsy structure of their billet.

"Well said young man, you'd make a good politician with a voice like that." An officer had overheard the discussion and wanted to see who it was.

"You mock me Sir."

"On the contrary Boy, I'm impressed. It has removed my doubts about you."

John was embarrassed by the interruption and pleased when the officer left. "It's not easy to explain Frederick, you have to feel it inside and follow your conscience."

Frederick sighed, "I'm still not sure. In fact, if the King had asked me first then I could be fighting for him."

The people of Lostwithiel had no wish to help Essex but with 10,000 troops thrust on them they had to be careful not to be outwardly defiant. John had no doubts about the justness of the Parliamentary cause but he was less than happy at the behaviour of its army. The soldiers were arrogant and unruly: they took what they wanted and treated the locals with contempt. One soldier, not content with taking food from the table of a family, had his eye on one of the daughters. The family were powerless to stop him. It was not an isolated incident and as the behaviour worsened, the resentment increased until a soldier lay in the dust, blood gushing from his throat. The retribution was swift and brutal and the townspeople quickly learned the lesson.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> August the King moved to Liskeard to stay with Joseph Jane, a Cornish Member of Parliament. The house was his base for the next six days while Royalist pioneers opened up the narrow lanes so the artillery could get to Lostwithiel.

It had been a long march and the Parliamentary soldiers were hungry. They poured into the shops and houses and took what food they needed. The townsfolk kept what they could but they quickly learned that the army came first. There was little thought of conserving supplies as Essex had promised that the navy would soon begin delivering food and ammunition to Fowey Port. The garrison there had been ordered to send up provisions on the tide.

William nodded in the direction of Lostwithiel. "He's going to take some shifting. He's got the river and his big guns up in they hills."

The King wanted to attack before Essex could get his defences in place but his officers managed to convince him of the dangers. They knew it would be a disaster and could cost them the battle. Essex was in too strong a position and the number of casualties would be crippling. Their advice was to use attrition, probing attacks to keep the enemy on edge until a shortage of food either forced him to surrender or to come out and fight. By then, Sir Richard Grenville would be there. The King agreed.

For the people of Lostwithiel the misery was just beginning. The occupying army vastly outnumbered the residents: they took over every building in the town. They seized what they needed and had the run of the taverns. In addition to the soldiers there were 2,500 horses to feed, water and house. Some stabled in the church. The town was at bursting point and the latrines overflowed. Sickness soon began to spread.

"Here Cornish boy." shouted one of the troopers. "Were they woman back there? George says they're all like that down here, something about being put to breed with oxen."

John didn't react – he was the new boy and had expected abuse. He pretended not to understand and replied with a few words of Cornish.

"What the hell does that mean? If you're swearing at us, I'll rip your guts open." They walked away, cursing the Cornish.

Sir Richard Grenville's Army had grown to about 2,000 by the time he left Penryn. He marched to Truro and then made his way along the river to Tregony. Only a few years earlier the place had been a busy inland port with sea-going ships moored at its quays. Now there were only small boats, the mud washed down from the moors had silted the river and large vessels could no longer reach there. Despite that, the town was still important and sent two members to Parliament. To the left was a steep hill leading up to the town: the men were breathing heavily as they reached the top.

## Chapter 70

John was now a member of an army desperate to escape. Rumour was that the Earl of Essex blamed Lord Robartes for his situation. The 'Western men,' as he called them, had misled him about the support he would receive from the Cornish. In a letter to Parliament he complained that the entire country was rising against him and that he faced three armies: Prince Maurice and his Western Army, Skellum Grenville from the west and the King and Lord Hopton from the east. Why, he asked, had no action been taken against them? It seemed the hunter had been caught in a trap of his own making.

Life in this army was not what John had expected. Food was in short supply and raiding parties foraged to the west, taking whatever they could find. The Royalists had no such problems. In the past they'd plundered freely but now, thanks to the King's order and a good supply line, it was not necessary. Because of this the local people provided them with a steady flow of information.

Jabe nudged William and he looked up to see a civilian being escorted to one of the tents. He was treated courteously and told to wait while an officer hurried to see the King. Within a few minutes there was a flurry of activity. "It's Gascoigne," shouted Jabe, "He's off somewhere." Sir Bernard Gascoigne, a continental mercenary in charge of Colonel Richard Neville's horse, thundered out of camp with his troops. The civilian was escorted to the edge of the camp where he rejoined some other men. "I wonder what that was all about," said Jabe. Some hours later, his curiosity was answered. Gascoigne had been to Boconnoc, Lord Mohun's house, where General Dalbier, a Dutchman and quartermaster general in Essex's Army, had set up his command post. The house had been well defended but the Royalists had attacked with such speed that they'd surprised the occupants while they were eating. Colonel Aldridge was captured, together with a number of high-ranking officers. General Dalbier escaped by removing his sword and hat and pretending to be one of Lord Mohun's servants.

"That'll upset the Earl," joked Jabe, "he's lost the house and some of his men."

William nodded, "That's only the start, I reckon he's going to get his ass kicked a few more times yet."

A few days later, Boconnoc became the King's headquarters. Its owner, Warwick Lord Mohun, had been slow in declaring his support but in September 1642, he'd raised a regiment of foot and become a King's man.

Essex's Army was a huge burden on the area. It plundered freely and local farms were quickly stripped of their harvest. Stocks would soon run low and there was no sign of the navy. He would then have to choose between fight or surrender.

For the Royalists, the decision was to attack or maintain the siege. Jabe was clear which he favoured and promised to share it with the King should they ever meet. "No bleddy point in us getting our heads blown off," he said. "We should sit here and let the buggers starve."

"Maybe," said William, "but I can't see his Majesty being happy about having his army tied up when it's needed elsewhere."

Jabe taunted his friend. "Ahhh yeah, I'd forgotten you're so well acquainted with his Majesty. Praps, when you're next having a drink together you can pass on my thoughts." William aimed a friendly slap and Jabe leaned back to avoid it, a smile on his face.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August the King wrote to the Earl of Essex. He urged him to surrender, to unite with him to help redeem the country and the Crown. The Parliamentary commander replied with a courteous note. He suggested that the King should talk to Parliament.

The Royalist officers didn't greet Lord Goring's appearance with enthusiasm and when the 36-year-old general was given immediate access to the King, they suspected treachery. As the cavalry formed up the next day the reason for his arrival became apparent.

William heard the news later in the day and could hardly believe it. "They arrested him, with the King looking on, they arrested him."

Lord Wilmot, General of the King's horse, had been astride his mount at the head of his regiment, completely unaware of what was to unfold. The dramatic event shocked the entire Royalist force and threatened the unity of the cavalry. Wilmot had protested his innocence and his fellow officers remonstrated with the King and demanded to know the reason. Charles was not used to having his orders questioned and told them so. He said his mind was set and he wouldn't back down but in the interest of unity, he was prepared to explain his reasons. Lord Wilmot stood accused of speaking contemptuously of his King and of communicating with the Earl of Essex. "Such conduct," he said, "couldn't be allowed at a moment when the Crown lies at stake upon the decision of a battle."

Wilmot denied the accusation. He demanded proof but it made no difference: he was stripped of his command and placed under guard. Many openly linked it with Goring's appearance and when the King appointed him in Wilmot's place, most guessed that he'd had a hand in the arrest.

"Now I know it's true," said Jabe. "We've got an idiot for a King and a drunkard leading his cavalry." William didn't reply.

Goring was an abrasive and difficult man, always quick to provoke trouble among his fellow officers. He'd learned his soldiering overseas and on his return to England, was appointed Governor of Portsmouth, one of the first towns to surrender to Parliament.

The King continued to urge some direct action: if not a full attack, then to increase the pressure. The Royalist infantry began to edge forward, towards the enemy positions. William gripped his musket, eyes straight ahead.

Jabe continued to moan. "I see the gentlemen of the cavalry are being kept well out of the action again. We've gotta soften them up so they can come along and take the credit." William rolled his eyes.

Essex responded with artillery fire but it was a brief action, they were already low on powder. There were no casualties but Jabe was not pleased at being used for target practice. Over the next few days the skirmishing increased, much of it because of Royalist pressure and the Parliamentarians' desperate search for food.

Essex read the message and threw it aside in disgust. One of the other officers picked it up and announced it was from General Waller. His progress had been delayed but he'd despatched Colonel John Middleton with 2,000 horse and dragoons. With no infantry to slow them they should arrive in time. Essex was not impressed and asked what in hell's name Waller was doing. It was a rhetorical question and his officers knew better than to respond. Anxious for any snippet of hope, the news of the rescue party quickly spread and by the time it reached John and Frederick the numbers had grown into a huge relieving army.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August Essex received another invitation to surrender. He gave the same response. Despite the bravado the Royalists were convinced that his army was near to collapse. The siege would continue, at least until Sir Richard Grenville arrived.

William liked the sound of it and repeated it to himself, "The Cornish Army is on its way." Memories of past encounters, before Lansdown and Bristol, flooded back and he paused to remember the friends he'd buried so far from home.

Grenville's force had grown to 2,500: it crossed the little river at the bottom of Grampound and trudged up the steep hill heading east. It was a long march but by the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> August, Bodmin was in sight. Some Parliamentary horse had been garrisoned there but too few to offer any real resistance. Before long, Grenville occupied the town. From there, he made for Cardinham Down and Lord Hopton. The following day he made the short ride to Boconnoc to meet the King.



## Chapter 71

In London the news-sheets lamented the fate of the Lord General, they said he was in great straits. There was little that Parliament could do except urge the rescue force to move faster.

News that Grenville had joined the besieging force spread quickly and William felt a pang of regret that he was not with them, fighting under a Cornish commander. Grenville had taken up a position to the north-west of the town, Prince Maurice was to the north and the King to the north-east. The Royalists easily outnumbered the Parliamentarians but as long as Essex held the hills and the riverbanks, an attack would be madness. Despite the boost from Grenville's arrival, the siege continued.

Royalist Commander Colonel Digby was intrigued as he read the note. It was a challenge. Parliamentary officer Colonel Straughan had invited him and one hundred young troopers to meet him and a similar force in armed combat. Perhaps it was to relieve boredom or to dispel any discontent at the lull in activities. Whatever the reason, Digby accepted.

By the time the story reached William it was all over. He shook his head. It was a tragic and pointless waste of life. The two groups had faced each other, Colonel Straughan with his men, all aged between sixteen and twenty, and Digby with his. The Royalists charged, firing their pistols. They were young and inexperienced and many had discharged their weapons before they were in range. Straughan had waited and when he gave the order his men had moved in and fired at close range killing half of Digby's men and wounding the others. It was total carnage. Sadly, it was an action approved at a high level.

The arrival of Sir Richard Grenville opened up new options and the Royalist officers agreed that his army should attack Lanhydrock House, Lord Robartes' mansion. It was just over a mile to the north of the town and about three miles west of the Royalist headquarters at Boconnoc. Its capture would give Grenville immense satisfaction. During the night he marched his infantry out of their quarters and down the valley to Respryn Bridge, a couple of miles north of Lostwithiel. Just a small force guarded it and he took it with little resistance. From there he headed for Lanhydrock House.

The action was brief. When the news reached William, his cheer made the others think that Lostwithiel had fallen. "That's one in the eye for bleddy Robartes," he said, "I bet Grenville's sitting in his best chair."

Other sections had advanced at the same time and Essex awoke to find the enemy even closer to his front door. His men were on edge, uncertain from where the next attack would come. Morale was low and the trickle of deserters convinced the Royalists the strategy was working.

John's belly ached and he longed for some of his mother's cooking. He rarely thought of her with any affection but he couldn't fault her food. There was little left in Lostwithiel and groups were sent out to find what they could from the surrounding farms. The civilians' hatred for their uninvited guests grew by the day. They were treated appallingly but any resistance had to be passive, they knew they were up against a ruthless enemy.

John Ennor was in one of the groups sent out to find food. Their route across the heathland took them close to the enemy and as they watched for snipers, they shielded their faces against the bracken thrown up by the swirling wind. Nearby, rabbits nibbled the grass: unaware they were centre stage in a huge conflict. One of those would make a tasty meal, he thought, if I could catch one. A soldier raised his musket to bag one for the pot but thought better of it: the enemy was not far away. Bits of paper were blown about by the wind, strewn around the heath and impaled on bushes. John grabbed a piece clinging to his

leg. He tried to make out what it said but gave up and stuffed it inside his coat. He would try to read it later. One of the others shouted that it was from the King, an offer of a pardon for any Parliamentary soldier who changed sides. Most jeered and made rude gestures in the general direction of the enemy but a few looked thoughtful. Musket shots rang out: a Royalist reply to the vulgarity. It was enough to send them scurrying for cover. When they arrived back in the town five men were missing. John passed over two rabbits.

The Royalist force was spread out along a line from Gram-pound to Bodmin, on the hills to the north of the town and on to Liskeard. With the sea to his rear, Essex had few options. Control of Fowey Harbour and the hills around Lostwithiel was critical.

Back in London the political leaders urged the relief force to move faster. Troops from Weymouth, Lyme and Dorchester were ordered to ride hard for Cornwall. It was a small force compared to the Royalist Army but an attack from the rear would relieve the pressure. Essex though, had long given up hope of them arriving in time. His only chance of escape was by sea. That was why he'd occupied Lostwithiel and Fowey, why it was so necessary to hold the port and the river.

This was also obvious to the Royalists and on the 13<sup>th</sup> August Major General Sir Jacob Astley and General George Goring moved along the east bank of the Fowey River to the ford over Penpol Creek at St Veep. It was lightly defended and they took it with little resistance. Once there, they occupied Lord Mohun's house at Hall, where the Bodinnick Ferry crossed. The river here was slow and majestic, it filled the large valley between the town of Fowey and the east bank. The Royalists continued their advance towards their main objective – Polruan Fort. The old building guarded the river entrance and controlled the passage in and out of the harbour. Despite its importance, Essex had placed just a few men there and they were easily overpowered. Two hundred Royalists now garrisoned it and the fort's artillery was re-directed towards the river mouth, St Catherine's Castle and the town of Fowey. The entire stretch of land to the east of the lower length of the River Fowey was now in Royalist hands: only the port at Par and some small coves remained open to Essex. The action had been a complete success and the King ordered Richard Grenville to close on the enemy on the western side of the river. Lord Hopton had been appointed general of the ordinance and he now prepared for the next action.

The King's order to refrain from plunder was clear but the body hanging from a tree at Lanhydrock House was evidence that not everyone had understood. The man who told William spared none of the gory details including the message pinned to the man's chest. "I bet Grenville did the hanging," added Jabe.

Some of the Parliamentary defenders still held the hope that John Middleton's column of horse would arrive in time but the message in Essex's hand dispelled it, it had been attacked by a Royalist force and routed. The last chance of rescue by Parliamentary land forces had gone.

Life for Essex's Army was getting worse by the day but as the summer weather gave way to unremitting rain, the Royalists also began to suffer. They awoke to a blustery, cold and wet day and Jabe's makeshift cover did little to protect him from the gusting wind and rain. Water poured through a hole and straight down his neck. "Bollocks," he said, trying to divert the flow. "How come we've got them by the balls and we're the ones sitting here, getting soaked."

William shrugged his shoulders. "Can't make you out. Just a few days ago you wanted to continue the siege. For what it's worth, I think you were right, they're near to starving."

Jabe grunted. "Praps they are but we're the ones out in this bleddy weather."

William couldn't argue. "If I was at home I'd be looking out and worrying about the corn. I hope John's got some in."

"I should think he has," said Jabe. "Your wife will see to that. You save your worrying for what's happening here."

The day drifted by with no action to speak of and with everyone trying to find what cover they could. Time passed slowly and it was late in the day when an excited shout interrupted their chatter. "Sounds like Grenville's taken the bridge, the one up river a mile or so."

"Hell," repeated Jabe, "he's taken the bridge." And then he added, "What bridge?" Sporadic musket fire interrupted the conversation and he didn't receive an answer. Forty prisoners were captured and taken to Liskeard but they somehow managed to escape.

There was no let up in the weather and the following day, the 16<sup>th</sup> August, started with driving rain and with a wet and dejected Jabe still complaining. "What I want to know is, who's winning this bleddy battle? Most of they bastards in the town have got a roof over their head while we're stuck out here with the rain pissing down our necks. I tell you what, we may be enjoying ourselves now but we're going to suffer for this in years to come!"

"I just hope we've got a few years ahead of us," said William, "If the enemy don't get me soon, you're going to drive me mad. Anyway, what would you be doing so much if you weren't here?"

"I'll tell you what I'd be doing. I'd be lying in my own bed with some young girl attending to my every need. That's what I'd be doing."

William laughed, "Well don't look at me, my bleddy sheep are more attractive than you."

The flow of deserters from the Parliamentary Army was increasing, each one complained of the lack of food. They'd not eaten for days and Essex again wrote to Parliament, "They mean to starve us out and if we go out to look for food, the people are as violent towards us as the enemy."

## Chapter 72

For the old fisherman at Bodinnick the war was inconvenient: he needed to be out catching fish to feed his family. Both armies had occupied his village and now his little boat remained upturned on the quay. He gazed at the soldiers over at Fowey and thought of better times. To the Parliamentary marksman at Fowey, the man in a colourful coat talking to the fisherman made a good target. He raised his musket but had no idea who he'd trapped in his sights. The weapon spat out its deadly missile and the single shot echoed through the river valley sending the sea birds soaring to the safety of the sky. When the smoke cleared, it was the fisherman who lay dead. Had the musketeer been more accurate, the fortunes of the battle, maybe the entire war, could've been very different. He'd narrowly missed killing Charles Stuart, the King of England.

John stared at the flowing water and at the holes in the riverbank where the wildlife lived. They were some miles from the coast and he guessed the Fowey River was larger further down but he'd no idea just how big. He thought of his home and the little river at the bottom of his lane. Mostly though, he thought of Jenefer. He was missing her more than he thought possible. He longed to lie with her again and he hoped and prayed that no one had taken his place. He closed his eyes and pictured her body, her welcoming lips, her ample breasts and her inviting thighs. He knew he was torturing himself but he couldn't help it.

The King called his officers to Boconnoc on the 18<sup>th</sup> August. Those in favour of a full attack had increased but the majority were for limited action against specific targets. Two objectives were agreed: Restormel Castle and the hills around Lostwithiel. The castle was to the north of the town: it guarded Lostwithiel and its bridge. To the east was Beacon Hill, a position crucial to the defence of the town, and north of there was Druid's Hill where a party of Parliamentary soldiers stood guard ready to raise the alarm if the Royalists approached.

Sir Richard Grenville's target was the castle. He marched out of Lanhydrock and made his way down the west side of the river towards the derelict building. Once owned by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, this would be the only action it had ever known. John Weare didn't expect an attack and when Grenville charged, the Parliamentarian commander and his Devon Regiment were soon in full flight, running from the action. The defensive line had been breached. The Royalists quickly took their place on the battlements and stood in readiness for a counter but it never came. Grenville left part of his force to guard it and continued his advance down the riverbank, towards the town.

At the same time, another Royalist force captured the advance post at Druid's Hill and opened the way for an assault on Beacon Hill. Under a cloak of thick mist, the Earl of Brentford's Oxford Army began the advance. Once again, the Parliamentary troops were unprepared. They fell back and the Royalists swarmed over the hill.

Messengers raced to tell the Earl of Essex. He was livid and immediately blamed Colonel John Weare for the loss of both positions. Restormel Castle was some way from Beacon Hill but it didn't prevent him blaming him for the entire debacle. Weare claimed a lack of clear orders but he couldn't deny that he'd been taken by surprise and that his force had run at the first sign of action.

Essex demanded that both positions be re-captured. His forces found Sir Richard Grenville in the fields to the north of the town and immediately attacked. At first, Grenville fell back but he soon established a good defensive position and managed to hold it. By nightfall the Royalists had a new front: Grenville to the north-west, Prince Maurice on the high ground to the north and Colonel Appleyard and a party of 1,000 Royalist musketeers over to the east: in the enclosures on the southern side of Boconnoc Park and, of greater importance, on Beacon Hill, just half a mile from the town. The first William knew of the night's work was in the morning when the Royalist guns on Beacon Hill opened fire on the town. Under cover of darkness and fog a twenty-yard square platform had been built during the night. The pioneers had cut down trees, dragged the huge logs into place and by daylight it was finished. Guns were put in place and aimed at the Parliamentary defences.

The Royalists spent the early part of the day bombarding Essex's Army. Most of his infantry had been in front of Lostwithiel, drawn up on two areas of rising ground, but the artillery fire from the east now left him with no choice but to withdraw them. His cavalry was to the west, away from the guns and in a position to protect the road to Fowey, his only route of escape. To add to his problems, his artillery was low on powder and shot and the gunners had to conserve the supply as much as possible. Their occasional return of fire kept the Royalists alert but did little to worry them.

The following day was misty and the artillery of both armies bombarded each other, the Parliamentarians sparingly. Unfortunately for the townspeople of Lostwithiel it was not only the military that suffered. Cottages at Bridgend were hit and set on fire and civilians as well as soldiers had to run for cover.

Restormel Castle was a hugely important gain and Essex was determined to re-take it. The Royalists were equally determined to hold onto it and Prince Maurice sent a detachment of men to help in its defence. As the Parliamentarians approached, they met with stiff resistance from groups of Royalists sent out to disrupt the attack. William and Jabe were in a group that had become separated from the main force: they were in a small party in the woods, pinned down by enemy fire.

“Bugger me,” said William. “We gotta get out of here or they’ll have us trapped like rats. Wait till the firin’ dies down and then run like hell.” A volley of musket shot flew through the bushes and as two of their colleagues fell, he shouted, “Now.” The pair scrambled through the foliage and dived for cover just as another barrage of shot winged by. Both men crouched behind a tree, shaking, and Jabe whispered, “Watch your ass. You get a musket ball up there and you can find someone else to dig it out.”

William was breathing heavily. He shook his head, “I’m too bleddy old for this game.”

“Old enough to be a granddad,” joked Jabe.

The firing had slowed and once again William shouted, “Jabe, come on.” In a moment they were up and running as fast as the undergrowth would allow but suddenly, from up ahead, musket fire opened up. It was from their own side. It slowed the enemy but now they were caught in cross-fire. Lead shot slammed into the trees from both directions but they’d no choice, they drove on as far as they dared and dived for cover. A short crawl took them back to their own lines.

Both men were exhausted. They lay on the ground trying to catch their breath when a shout went up, “They’ve got Champernon.” As the smoke cleared, they could see him on the ground, motionless. Two men scrambled forward to recover his body but the firing began again and they had to leave him. They just managed to grab his sword and cloak.

All of the Royalist musketeers now aimed in the general direction of the enemy and after one volley they dashed the short distance to the castle. It had bought them some time and most were through the gateway before the attackers could reply. As the Parliamentarians opened fire again, two Royalists fell, one had been trying to help the other. Lead shot slammed into the stonework but the defenders now returned fire and their fallen comrades were immediately avenged.

The Parliamentarians had had the better of the skirmishing but taking the castle was another matter and from the relative safety of the battlements, Grenville’s men easily kept them at bay. As darkness fell, they withdrew to report back to the Earl of Essex. He wouldn’t be pleased.

As Maurice’s men returned to their position to the north of the town, Jabe tried to suppress a smile. “I think we’re in for a bollocking.” William frowned. “You know we left Champernon for dead? Well he wasn’t. Dead that is. He was only wounded and now he’s been captured. I bet he’s none too pleased with us, especially as we’ve got his sword.”

John was on food patrol again. The recent squeeze had made life even more difficult and the Royalist patrols were a constant threat. The only area still available to them lay to the west of the town and that was to become even smaller.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August, Sir Thomas Basset’s regiment was on its way to St Blazey and Par to prevent the use of the harbour there. A reconnaissance party had reported that the Parliamentarians were squeezed into the bit of land between Lostwithiel and Fowey – just a couple of miles wide.

The 24<sup>th</sup> August dawned with Essex’s Army on the offensive. His artillery spent the morning firing their nine-pounder demi-culverins at the battery on Beacon Hill. The Royalist gunnery was undamaged but the tower of St Nectan’s Chapel had been hit. The Royalist response destroyed houses in the town and damaged St Bartholomew’s Church. The townsfolk despaired, they were being mistreated by the enemy and bombarded by their friends.

William was cleaning his musket when Jabe rushed over. "Calm down," he said, "you're babbling. I can't tell what you're on about."

Jabe tripped over his words as he tried to tell the story. "They've pulled out – they're gone."

"Gone? Who said so?" asked William and then, with a frown he said, "They aren't gone, I can still here their guns."

"They have I tell you, the scouts told us as they went to see the King."

"So it's happening at last," said William, "well thank God for that. I'm fed up with this bleddy town, tis time we moved on." He paused to listen. "But they're still firing. You sure about this?"

"Course they're still firing," shouted an excited Jabe, "that's to cover their backs."

This was the news the Royalist had waited a month to hear. The Oxford Army Infantry and the Western foot under Sir Richard Grenville were placed on alert. At the King's signal they were to attack the rear of the fleeing army. Tension was high as they gripped their weapons but when the order finally arrived it was to stand down until the morning.

"I can't make it out," said William. "What's the bleddy point in waiting till tomorrow?"

"Praps the King wants to give them a head start," suggested Jabe, "your Majesty being such a sporting gentleman."

The following day was wet and windy and King Charles was in position on Beacon Hill by 3.00am. He sent a message to Maurice and Astley saying, "It's a fit morning to do the business." Half the cavalry was sent to Respryn Bridge to support Grenville as he advanced on the west bank of the river. Prince Maurice confirmed that his infantry was in position and ready. William picked up his musket, said a prayer and wished Jabe the best of luck.

As the hours passed, the tension increased and William, never one to enjoy the waiting game, paced up and down. "What's happening now?" he shouted, "They'll be on the bleddy boat before we start."

Eventually the order arrived. They were to stand down again.

"So your bleddy scouting friends got it wrong," taunted William. "They were just taking cover and they bleddy idiots thought they'd gone. It would've been a hell of a mess if we'd attacked."

Jabe shrugged, "Well, don't blame me: I was only passing on what I heard. Anyway, I'm hungry, let's get some food." Unfortunately the food was not that plentiful. It was not as bad as the far-off days at Stratton but when the meal was over, he was still hungry. Nothing worried him like a shortage of food. "Hell, I thought they were the ones in trouble, not us. My bleddy guts think my throats been cut." The false alarm had been disappointing but the shortage of food now occupied their minds. "Do you reckon we're going to have to pull out? I mean, we can't stay here if there's nothing to eat." Just then, the arrival of two food convoys was met with cheers. There was no more talk of ending the siege.

Essex had long given up hope that Waller would make it in time. He shook his head and sat down to write yet another letter to Parliament. He described his plight, cursed Waller and complained about the advisers who'd persuaded him to invade Cornwall.

There was little action and as William stared into the fire, his thoughts were of home. He wondered if anyone had replaced him in Ann's bed. Perhaps they were enjoying the delights that were rightly his. He worried about his daughters with only John to protect them. He'd little concern for Joan and her mother: they could go to hell as far as he was concerned. If the war went on for much longer then John would be involved but for which side would he fight? Since Richard's death at Stratton he increasingly thought of John. He was now his only son and he longed to talk to him, even to embrace him. He'd no way of knowing he was on the other side of the narrow strip of land separating the two armies. His peace was broken as Jabe returned.

"Heard the news?"

"No, but I spose we're going to," William snapped, "How the hell do you always manage to find out what's happening before I do?"

"Must be my look of authority," he joked. "They wanted me on the Council of War but I said I couldn't spare the time."

"Bullshit," said William, "What's the news?"

"Well, you know how they keep telling us that Essex is low on powder. Well, last night Hopton sent a man over to blow up their ammunition store. Seems like he put a match to one of the wagons but it didn't explode: they reckon the fuse failed."

"And?" said William.

"That's it. The fuse must have gone out."

"So, what you're saying is, nothing happened."

The little man shrugged his shoulders. "I just thought you'd like to know." Two tobs of earth hit him and as he scampered away he said, "Please your bleddy selves, I'll keep it to myself next time."

"Fat chance," shouted William.

In the Parliamentary camp it had been the vigilance of the guards that had saved the day. They'd spotted the fuse and wrenched it out. Essex had huffed and puffed and expressed his distaste for an act of ungentlemanly warfare.

Starvation was forcing men to desert Essex's Army and as three men ran towards the Royalists lines, shouting and waving their hats, an officer barked out, "Hold your fire." They'd not eaten for days and before they were questioned, they were given a meal.

"Poor buggers," said William, "they're bleddy starving. I can't see how they're holding out."

The men said that soldiers and civilians were dying of starvation and sickness and that the whole town stank of sewage. They were even attacked by groups of farmers as they searched for food. No cause was worth that and they agreed to change sides.

John Ennor was in a food party sent to a nearby farm. As they approached, the officer said, "Check the sheds, see if you can find any eggs or poultry."

John pulled open the door of an old shed. In the darkness he could see two figures, a boy and a girl clinging to each other. "It's alright," he said, "I won't hurt you. I just want some eggs."

The young girl was terrified and her voice trembled as she spoke. "We got none Mister, the other soldiers took them. They had our pigs too and my pet goat." She was in tears and shaking.

The boy was younger but full of spirit. "If you come any closer, you'll have to fight me."

John smiled. "I'll not fight you Boy, I'd feed you if I could."

One of the other soldiers had heard the conversation and walked over to join them. He was less affected by the pathetic sight and laughed at the bravado. "Well," he said, "a ripe young girl."

"She's too young for you," barked John, "now back off and leave them be."

"Oh, I forgot," he sneered. "They're your country folk. Well, it'll take more than you to stand in my way."

The sound of a sword being drawn made both men turn: the rest of the troop had joined them. The officer glowered at the man, "They're children," he said, "just like mine at home. Now, back off." A few hours later the group trudged back into the town with little to show for their efforts: John had made another enemy.

Frederick was still smiling when he joined him, his attempt to find food had been more amusing.

"So where was this," asked John.

"Oh I don't know, about a mile and to the west. We came across an old man at the end of a lane, pitchfork in hand. The more we taunted him the angrier he got. He waved his pitchfork at us, daring us to take him on. That bigmouth Smeeson couldn't resist taunting him with mock attacks. He swung his musket butt near his face and pretended to be afraid but the old man was quicker than he expected and he caught him with a prong. It sliced through his clothing and found flesh. Smeeson cried out. He grabbed his knife and shouted, 'You bastard, I'll rip your bleddy guts open.' Then this young girl screamed, 'You leave granfer alone'. Smeeson stopped rubbing his leg and turned towards her. He started laughing and said, 'Well come on then girl, I'd rather have a good shag than a killing any day. It's time you were put to the bull.' The old man wasn't having none of it and he gave him another jab with his pitchfork. Smeeson squealed and swung at him with his knife but by then a group of boys had appeared and we had to pull back. Smeeson was mad as a bull, not so much at his injuries but from us lot, laughing at him. He swore that he was going back to slit the old man's throat and have the girl."

The bombardment from Beacon Hill continued to take its toll. At times, it was difficult to know which side had done the most damage but the people knew where to direct their hatred. When the opportunity arose, they would take their revenge on Essex and his marauders.

In Fowey, the people went about their life as best they could. Many houses had been taken over by soldiers and others damaged. The town had been attacked before – by the French and the Spanish. Now it was the English. The arrogance and cruelty was hard to take and they prayed for an end to it. Jonathan Rashleigh's Menabilly, a large house a couple of miles or so from Fowey, had been taken over and was now a Parliamentary base. Clothing and valuables were taken from every room and the entire building vandalised. Sheep and cattle were butchered and the estate laid waste out of sheer vindictiveness.

The Royalists' problems were small compared to the Parliamentarians and on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, the Earl of Essex addressed his officers. His face was stern as he spat out Waller's name. "We must look to ourselves," he said. "There'll be no help from our land forces." He told them he wouldn't surrender. "Whatever the



situation," he said, "I'll not give the King the satisfaction of taking my sword." Nor was he prepared to stay there and starve. With food supplies almost gone and hardly any fodder for the horses they would attempt an escape. The cavalry would break through the Royalist lines and head for Plymouth while the infantry made for the coast to be rescued by the Parliamentary fleet. The mood was sombre but there were no questions, just murmurs of approval and Essex was grateful for the support. The plan was to be kept from the ordinary soldiers until the last possible moment and even then, they would only be told as much as they needed to know. In spite of that John soon heard about it and it seemed to him that the entire army knew.

Later that day two Parliamentary soldiers surrendered to a Royalist party on the heath. In itself it was not unusual but they claimed to be deserters from Essex's Army with information about the cavalry escape plan. They were taken to Boconnoc House for interrogation. It had a ring of truth to it and plans were put in place to intercept the cavalry as it tried to escape. Lord Goring was to leave St Blazey and attack as it rode out and Sir William Waldegrave was to guard the approaches to Saltash in case the troopers managed to reach there. The garrisons at Polruan and St Veep were put on alert and the infantry ordered to stand to arms all night. The road to Liskeard was thought to be the most likely escape route and a roadside cottage was garrisoned with fifty musketeers. They were to ambush the retreating column and raise the alarm.

The Earl of Essex was oblivious to the Royalist ambush. It was dark and misty, ideal conditions for the escape, and at nightfall Sir William Balfour and his cavalry moved across the river and waited. In the early hours of the morning the 2,000 horse, hooves muffled to reduce the sound, moved out and headed for the Liskeard road. Ahead of them was the ambush point. Desperation had forced them to escape and now they were riding into a trap.

John and Frederick watched as they rode out. There was often bad feeling between the infantry and cavalry but they wished them well, after all, it was 2,000 less mouths to feed.

The column headed along the track making as little noise as possible, even the horses seemed to sense the need for silence. As they approached the cottage all was quiet. Nothing suggested that 50 muskets were ready and waiting to be unleashed into their midst. No one spoke but the dull thud of hooves and the occasional whinny couldn't be missed in the night air. The leading riders drew level with the cottage, unaware of the danger now just a few yards away. Balfour could see the outline of the building, maybe even sense the danger, but within minutes the entire force had passed by. There had been no shots, no challenge and no warning.

Royalist officer Lord Cleveland and his troop of 250 horse were on patrol when they caught sight of a large group of horsemen coming out of the mist. Visibility was poor but he knew it could only be Balfour – something had gone wrong. Outnumbered eight to one he was in no position to attack so he sent a rider to raise the alarm and followed at a safe distance. The light began to improve and he was joined by 100 of Thomas Aston's horse and 150 Cornish horse under Captain Mohun but this still left him heavily outnumbered. With orders to observe and not engage he continued to follow them across Braddock and Caradon Downs and on towards Saltash.

As the escaping cavalry rode down the hill into the town Sir William Waldegrave attacked and with Cleveland's troop now charging from behind, Balfour was caught in a trap. The fight raged but Balfour's objective was to escape rather than fight and he managed to break away and head for the river. While part of his force held off the attackers, he ferried his men and their horses across into Devon. By the time they reached Plymouth, they had lost about 100 men.

Later, the King demanded to know how the ambush party could've missed 2,000 horses riding by. There was only one logical conclusion: they'd contrived to turn the other way. He accused them of dereliction of

duty and cowardice and threatened to hang them all. Questions were also raised about Goring's part in the fiasco and one cynic suggested he was probably too drunk to ride.

## Chapter 73

### To Castle Dore

Soon after Balfour had left, the remainder of the Parliamentary Army began its march to the coast. The infantry on the east bank of the river crossed the town bridge and joined the others in a retreat along the lanes and fields. Almost immediately it began to rain. This was no summer shower: it was torrential. It stung their faces like Devil's venom. Before long the Lostwithiel to Fowey lane was a quagmire. The earth sucked in the water and soon became thick, clinging mud: in places almost impassable.

When the alarm was raised in the Royalist camp there were those who thought it another false alarm but they quickly realised that this time it was for real. The King's Infantry raced towards the town and a messenger was sent to alert Goring. In driving rain, William's regiment entered Lostwithiel, it was about 7.00am. "Bleddy Hell," shouted Jabe, "'tis pissing it down," his language as colourful as ever.

There was little opposition but up ahead, on the bridge, they spotted a group of soldiers trying to light a fuse. They scrambled away and two men ran over and kicked the explosives into the river. Parliamentary musket fire rang out. It slammed into the chasing Royalist group and the two men dived for cover. The shots had come from a dozen soldiers left behind to cover the retreat. The Royalist reply was immediate. There was no time to take prisoners and they paused only long enough to ram their musket butts down onto the heads of both the dead and living. The driving rain mixed with the blood and gore to form pale red rivulets in the mud.

Grenville's men led the attack, running through the fields, chasing along the lanes, determined to destroy those who'd dared to invade their country. Grenville knew the area well: he'd once held property at Tywardreath and been the Member of Parliament for Fowey.

Bodies and deserted artillery littered the ground. A cartload of weapons, a cannon stuck fast, everywhere muskets and pikes coated in mud: the lane was full of the trappings of war. The conditions were atrocious and progress was slow. Mud clung to John Ennor's boots and his legs were coated with the oozing stuff. The rain drove into his face. It was stinging, biting and he struggled to maintain his balance. Musket shots winged by and he pushed those in front, urging them to move faster or get out of his way. Soldiers who he'd lived with for the last few weeks fell dead or exhausted and were quickly pushed into the mud by the boots of those they'd fought with. Major General Phillip Skippon urged his men to save the artillery. It slowed their progress but it was needed to cover their escape. The Royalist infantry was gaining on them and he knew that some of the larger pieces would have to be sacrificed. The Royalist cavalry was overtaking the stragglers and cutting them down. Men and women in the baggage train were being picked off by musket fire or slashed by pike and sword. William was in the thick of it but he too was plastered in mud and finding it difficult to stay on his feet. Jabe had fallen headlong and was an amusing sight but there was no time for laughter. The Parliamentary soldiers dodged from hedge to hedge, desperately trying to evade their pursuers but many were exhausted, they gave up the struggle and waited to be despatched. Fowey lay ahead but no one seemed to know in which direction.

By late morning, the Royalist cavalry had outpaced its infantry and was brought to a halt as Parliamentary musketeers opened fire from behind the thick hedges. Essex's Army was making a stand and for a while it held its ground but Royalist Captain Edward Brett urged his cavalry forward, he drove the enemy soldiers from cover and cut them down as they ran. He was hit but pressed forward, forcing the enemy up the hill

until some could run no further. He'd performed with great bravery and as he withdrew to have his wounds dressed the King stepped forward and knighted him.

Many Parliamentarians had been killed or captured and John feared that none would survive. He'd not seen Frederick fall but he was sure he passed his motionless body lying in the mud. He'd gone to join his father.

The Royalist cavalry pressed home the attack but without the infantry they couldn't finish the job: they paused to give them time to catch up. For Essex's Army it was a two-hour respite but when Sir Thomas Basset and his regiment of foot arrived from St Blazey it began again. He attacked the west wing. Colonel Appleyard led the vanguard against the centre and Goring joined in with his 2,000 horse. The numbers ranged against Essex's Army was huge and still mounting. He'd been driven back, almost to Castle Dore, the great Iron-age earthwork about two miles from Fowey. Once defended by clubs and spears, today's warriors had far more potent weaponry.

The Parliamentary artillery was dragged onto the central mound and the four regiments of Essex, Robartes, Bartlet and Skippon were positioned to defend it. A small party of horse from the Plymouth regiment had remained behind when Balfour made his escape and in the late afternoon they counter-attacked. They pushed the Royalist infantry back but their success was short-lived and when the Royalist cavalry charged again, they retreated to join their infantry.

The pressure was unrelenting and few thought the defenders could hold out for long. When the break came, it was Colonel Weare's infantry which turned and ran. They clambered onto the earthworks. With the line breached, Robartes and Bartlet pulled back leaving the Earl of Essex to the east, isolated and exposed. He'd no choice but to join them. Yet again he'd reason to curse Colonel John Weare. Essex now organised the regiments into a defensive position around the artillery. The banks and ditches of Castle Dore would be their last stand.

John lay on the ground, panting, lungs fit to burst, all chance of escape gone. He was cold, wet through and coated with mud. They were a pathetic, beaten army, a far cry from the arrogant force that had entered Cornwall just over a month before. He looked out across the steep hill they'd just climbed from Tywardreath, at the green countryside and the blue-grey water of St Austell Bay. Behind them, nestling by the river, was the hamlet of Golant. To the left, the south, was Fowey itself, their intended point of escape.

Only the failing light prevented the final charge. The King accepted that nothing more could be achieved that day and ordered a cease-fire. The enemy had nowhere to run. The Royalists were jubilant, confident of completing the job the next day. The Parliamentarians could only foresee defeat. The King strained his eyes through the failing light: he could make out the shapes of the Parliamentarians clustered around their baggage train and artillery. As night approached, the Royalists watched for any movement: the occasional musket shot kept everyone on edge. It was stormy and the King and his servants slept under a hedge, his troop of lifeguards in the next field.

Essex had posted a ring of lookouts and John was over to the west, in a grassy hollow, watching for any sign of attack. Despite the desperate situation, there were those who still wanted to fight but with no cavalry and a huge force ranged against them, it was hopeless. The loss of Polruan and Par left them with just a few small coves as possible points of escape.

John peered into the gloom. There was the occasional glow of match but apart from that he could see nothing. Every sound played on his nerves, was it a wild animal or approaching footsteps? The certainty of attack at daylight and the thought of a painful death terrified him. A sound from his right broke the silence. A soft snore, interspersed with fitful snorts. One of the other lookouts had fallen asleep. Who could blame him, thought John? They were all exhausted but blame him they would. Men had been hanged for less and

he would be shown no mercy. He picked up a tub of earth and lobbed it. The snoring ceased, noisily. He crawled over. "You alright?" he asked.

"Yeah, thanks for that, I couldn't keep my eyes open. You're John Ennor aren't you? the Cornishman who joined us at Bodmin."

"Yeah, that's me. It's lucky I heard you. It'll be an even longer sleep if they catch you dozing on duty. Think on that and it'll stop you dropping off again."

"I'm Henry Gould. How the hell did we get mixed up in this? I'd no choice but you should be on the other side, you being a Cornishman."

"I'm beginning to think the same but there was no way I could fight for Charles Stuart, I wanted to strike a blow for freedom, to be rid of a tyrant."

"I don't even know what I'm fighting for. I just fell in with the rest, it was what was expected."

"Well whatever our reasons, it looks like we're on the losing side. If it's like this across the country then the King will soon be back on his throne writing out his list for the hangman." John wriggled back to his position. Strange, he thought, the man's got no idea what he's fighting for – just like poor old Frederick.

After the excitement of joining Essex's Army at Bodmin, John was now totally disillusioned. This army had wanted to hang him at first and now the other side wanted him dead. He settled down, eyes straight ahead, from where the attack would come. What he would give to be back in his own home being nagged by his mother and grandmother. Self-pity overcame him and he wondered if he would ever see Jenefer again.

For Essex, there would be no victory in Cornwall but there was still a chance of escape. Some of his officers were willing to continue the fight, to break out and run for the small cove of Polkerris. The navy concerned him: it would have to pick them up but he'd no idea where it was. He sent a messenger to Major General Skippon with an escape plan. He didn't wait for a response. Two hours after dark, on the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> August, the Earl of Essex, Lord Robartes and Sir John Merrick crept away from Castle Dore. Some of their men spotted them but who would dare make a challenge, certainly not the youngster from Cornwall. He would never have guessed that they were about to escape in a fishing boat.

## Chapter 74

### Surrender at Castle Dore

William Ennor settled for the night. He tried to think of other things, of Ann, his daughters, but he was plagued with images of Joan and the old woman. He wondered how John was faring with those two. Memories of Richard flooded back, he missed him most of all. How he wished he'd made him join Mohun's regiment, perhaps then he could've protected him. A father should never lose a son: it was the wrong order of things. When Walter had told him that he'd been killed, it didn't sink in immediately, he was in shock. Later, when he'd come to accept it, he'd wanted to ask more questions but it was too late, by then Walter lay on the hill at Lansdown, his head half hacked from his body, his brains spilt out over the grass. This was a terrible war, a war where friend fought friend and brother fought brother. Had he progressed that further he may have considered it was one where father fought son.

Henry Gould was asleep again. Whispered voices confirmed that this time he would have to answer for his neglect.

The three crouching figures moving slowly away from their lines had looked suspicious. They were little more than shadows to John but they seemed familiar. He was sure that one of them was the Earl of Essex. He waited but they didn't return and he wondered if they'd escaped. If they'd made it then so could he. His fear of the morning was stronger than his conscience: he lay on his belly and began to crawl.

He'd no idea where he was heading and no plan, he just had to get away. Perhaps the river was close or maybe he could find a tree and hide in its branches. No, that was out, he'd seen someone else do that and then fall as half a dozen muskets were discharged into the leafy canopy. Better to surrender or even pretend to be a Royalist soldier.

He made slow progress: it was just like back home when he'd crept up on an unsuspecting rabbit except this was not something for the pot, his life depended on it. He'd gone some distance but he'd no idea where he was. He lay there, hardly daring to move or breathe. As he looked back at the dark forms on Castle Dore, at the men he'd fought with, he became aware of whispering and guessed that he'd reached enemy lines. He'd made it across the open space. With the dawn, came the assurance that he'd joined the ranks of a Royalist unit. They were uniformed and he stood out like a goat in a flock of sheep.

"So, where have you sprung from?" asked one of the soldiers.

His partner swung his musket and aimed it at John. "I'll wager he's a rebel. What is it Boy, are you a spy or a turncoat making a run for it?"

"I'm a Royalist," replied John, "separated from my unit."

One of the men said, "Well, he's got a Cornish accent, I'll grant him that."

The other one laughed, "He ain't one of us: he's just crawled over from the enemy. He's a lying little bastard. Cut his throat and be done with it."

"No wait," pleaded John, "I've got some information. It'll be of use to you. I saw some men leaving the Parliamentary lines last night, important men."

"And?"

"Well, that's it, I need to tell someone."

"You just did, and now you've used up your bargaining power."

"Hang on Joseph," said the other man, "we can't go to the Captain with a message and then tell him we killed the informant."

It was sound advice. "Right Boy but there'd better be a bit more or it'll be the rope for you. Then you'll pray for the knife. They'll not be easy on a Cornishman fighting for the Earl."

John and his two captors crept away from the front and reported to a captain. He looked at the scruffy boy, coated in mud, and then said, "Right, who were these men you saw?"

"I think it was Essex and Skippon."

He laughed, "Your Major General Skippon, some sort of magician is he?"

"I...I don't understand."

"Well I've just seen him amongst the rebels. Unless he has magical powers and can be in two places at once, I'd say you're lying."

"Perhaps I was wrong about Skippon, it...it was dark."

"Perhaps Sir, you are wrong about the whole thing. It could be that you're giving me a story to buy a chance of escape. I'm not even going to report it to my superiors: I've no wish to become the butt of their jokes. Now, what would make the best sport lads, to send him back or hang him ourselves?"

The men laughed, "Difficult choice Captain."

"Let me join you Sir, I'll fight for the King if you'll let me."

"I think not." The captain hesitated, "Hold him here, I just need to check something."

"Right Captain, we'll entertain him a bit." He turned to John, "Ever seen a hanging, Cornish boy? They put you in the back of a cart, tie your hands behind your back and put a rope around your neck. Then they walk the horse away, slow like, so that the noose gradually tightens. Either that or they sling a rope over a tree and haul you up. The more you struggles the tighter it gets, tighter and tighter till your eyes are popping, your face is bloated and you pisses yourself. Course, if you'd any friends they'd rush up and yank your heels to speed you on your way but I can't see anyone doing that for you."

John had seen a hanging. It was much as the soldier had said. He sat in silence. If they came for him then he would run: a bullet in the back would be better than a noose.

It was about fifteen minutes later when the captain returned. He looked at John, "It seems you told the truth. Some men were spotted but our dozy guards thought they were from our ranks and failed to challenge them. I've told the King your story so you've done me a bit of good. There'll be no sport today lads, the King won't let me hang him or hand him back." He turned to John. "But your side will know you're a traitor, they'll at least have a chance to curse you. And when we've finished here, we'll leave you to your fellow countryman, Sir Richard Grenville. I'm sure he'll enjoy meeting the Cornish boy who fought for Parliament."

John had the King to thank for his life but hated the thought of being passed to Grenville. He looked at his captors, "If you send me to him then I'm a dead man anyway, that bastard will have no truck with Cornish rebels."

He was right to fear Grenville: he'd a reputation for cruelty to both friend and foe. One of the soldiers chuckled. "That's him Boy, he starves his prisoners to death, there's none crueller."

Despite being injured, Skippon now took charge of the beleaguered army, his bravery in contrast to that of his superiors. He addressed his Council of Officers. "Gentlemen, you see that our general and some chief officers have thought fit to leave us. I now propose we follow the example of our cavalry and attempt an escape through enemy lines. It's surely better to die than live in dishonour." There was anger amongst his fellow officers. That their commander could run away and leave his army to face the enemy was an act few could excuse. Skippon outlined Essex's plan to escape by sea. They were to head for a small cove from where the navy would rescue them.

To most, the plan seemed absurd and one of the officers said, "We'll be cut down before we get to the beach and anyway, where is this navy that has proved so reluctant to approach the coast?" The plain truth was that they'd had enough. They were hungry and exhausted: Essex's desertion had been the last straw. Skippon told them of Essex's alternative order which was that they should gather around the powder wagons and threaten to blow them up but one officer asked by what right Essex gave such orders. Both plans were rejected without discussion and by a show of hands the decision was for immediate surrender. Major General Skippon was to seek the best possible terms.

There was no attack at first light, the King sensed that surrender may be close and that more fighting wouldn't be necessary. While they waited, the Royalists trained their guns on the enemy and busied themselves clearing gaps through the hedges for the cavalry. William gripped Jabe's shoulder as a Parliamentary officer shouted, "Over there, a white flag, it's all over."

As soon as they were sure that there would be no further firing, a messenger emerged from the despondent ranks of the Parliamentary Army and made his way towards the Royalist commanders. To a sigh of relief from both sides the King ordered a truce.

Charles examined Skippon's proposal and after a brief discussion he handed his reply to the messenger. Even before the man returned, Major General Skippon could tell that it had been rejected: he'd asked for too much. But that was not the end of the matter and the King proposed that three people from each side be appointed to resolve the differences. They were to report back as soon as possible.

While Skippon waited, he moved among his men, reassuring them that no more fighting would be necessary. He was a good commander and anxious to bring this dreadful situation to a close in the best way possible. He met with the officers not involved in the negotiations and it was then that he realised one was missing. His first thought was that Colonel Weare had defected. He'd been blamed for the surrender at Restormel Castle and for running away from his position at Castle Dore. No doubt he feared repercussions.

The details were resolved by evening and Major General Skippon met the King to formally surrender. Skippon was well regarded by both sides and the King offered him a pardon if he would defect. Ever the man of honour, he refused. He returned to his lines and ordered his men to lay down their arms. The Lostwithiel Campaign was at an end.

## Chapter 75

The dejected officers watched as Colonel John Weare returned. Skippon took him to one side and asked where he'd been. Weare told him that he'd been asked to dine with one of the Royalist Majors but had then been handed to Sir Richard Grenville who'd forced him to change sides and swear allegiance to the King. Once he'd signed, the guard was removed and he was able to escape.

Skippon was incredulous. "Your story leads me to conclude that their offer was not generous enough?"

Weare was indignant. "That sounds like you're accusing me of desertion."

"There are those who will, the Earl for one if he hears of it."

"The Earl! I think he may be too busy defending his own name to worry about me."

"Maybe, but a desperate man is dangerous. He'll involve you, be sure of that. I'd prepare a better story than the one you've just given me."

The terms were long and detailed but they were as good as the Parliamentarians could expect. They had to give up their artillery, hand weapons and ammunition. They could retain one carriage for each regiment and then march away with their colours, the officers with their personal weapons.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1644, in heavy rain, with King Charles and his infantry standing by, Major General Skippon led the 6,000 survivors away from Castle Dore. William couldn't understand it. "We're setting them free to fight again, what's the point in that?" There was some truth in what he said but the Royalists could simply not support so many prisoners. Had the King not been present then Sir Richard Grenville may well have found another solution.

John Ennor watched as the defeated soldiers passed, his eyes focussed on the ground. They'd been told of his treachery and the spitting and abuse was hard to take. As the long column wound its way down the hill William Ennor made his way across to where John was held. "May I speak with my son, Captain?"

"Your son! Have a care, it'll do you no good to mix in such company."

William didn't flinch as he asked, "Have you a son?"

"I have soldier. It's impertinent of you to ask but I'd do the same. You can speak to him."

William walked over to where he was standing. "So John, it's come to this."

"It has Father, but I followed my conscience. I did what I thought was right and even though we were opposed you must give me credit for that."

"We've often argued about the rights and wrongs of this war and I don't believe we'll ever agree but what you did last night, is your conscience happy about that?"

John ignored the jibe: he couldn't defend his action. "I belong to a different age. I can't touch my cap to men who are no better than me."

"If you mean the King then I'd warn you to have a care. He's our Monarch and deserves our respect."

"Respect? How can I respect a man who is King by accident of birth?"

"And what of your side? Your precious Earl of Essex and Lord Robartes, the brave men who have chosen to desert you, are they so different?"

"I'll grant you that," he said, "They've bought their positions and the privileges that go with them but I don't have to worship them as my sovereign."

William ignored the point. "I believe you're not to hang and for that I'm grateful. Whether you wish it or not, we now fight on the same side."

"Yes, the three of us."

"No, just two. Richard was killed at Stratton. Fighting for what he believed in."

John didn't answer, he couldn't. He knew the risks of war but this was his brother. There was a moment of quiet between the two men.



William broke the silence. "So what of home? Are the girls well?"

John knew that it was not the time to tell him about Catherine. He would lie. "Aye, all's well, all's well."

## Chapter 76

The King ordered that the prisoners were to have safe passage out of Cornwall, there were to be no reprisals. Those fit to march would go to their garrisons at Poole and Wareham while the sick and injured would be taken by boat to Plymouth.

Despite the order, the defeated soldiers were attacked at every opportunity. The escort was powerless to prevent it and even joined in. The Royalists had endured weeks of hardship and were not about to miss the chance to exact revenge. But the Parliamentarians' ill treatment by the soldiers was nothing compared to what they would receive from the civilians at Lostwithiel. During the occupation, many townspeople had died and others had suffered extreme starvation and cruelty. Now they waited as the stricken army approached, stripped of its former arrogance and as the long line of dejected humanity made its way through the town, the escort stood to one side. The crowd surged forward: it wouldn't be denied the chance of retribution. The people were out of control, like savage animals taking revenge on a defeated predator. A shout went up, "Kill the dogs and ravish the bitches" and the women camp followers huddled together for protection. Skippon protested to the King but even he could do nothing to stop them.

William watched as the women joined in, they were as bad as their menfolk. They picked on the young soldiers and the female camp followers, ripped off their clothes and beat them with sticks. Stones rained down and many were thrown from the bridge into the river. Some tried to protect themselves but it was pointless.

William had shared in the anger but this was terrible, he wanted to stop it but knew that he couldn't. But for his defection, John could've been in there.

"You can understand it," said Jabe, "they've been treated dreadful but tis all too savage for me."

The cruelty eased as they left the town but as they retreated the way they'd marched just a month earlier the people of the hamlets came out to throw stones or hit them with sticks. There was little food and no shelter. They knew that their torment would end at the Tamar but first they had to pass through Launceston. Word of the retreat had reached deep into the country areas and a huge crowd had filled the town, all eager for revenge. The pathetic straggle of human suffering knew what to expect. Some managed to protect themselves but others fell and were stripped of their clothes and boots. Many succumbed to the blows while others struggled to their feet and continued on, naked and barefoot. As in Lostwithiel, the women joined in with crude weapons: they took great delight in attacking the remaining female camp followers. There was no thought of whether they were whores or soldiers' wives as they were thrown in the river and held under with poles until they drowned. Many were no longer able to resist – the numbers ranged against them were so overwhelming. One young girl who tried to fight back was singled out for special treatment. She was taken down a side street and tied to a tree for use by anyone bold enough. The following morning she was still there: her hours of darkness had been terrifying. Her final torment was to join the others in the river.

As the King made his way from Castle Dore many came out to celebrate his victory, his greatest of the entire war. He rewarded many and told Francis Basset of Tehidy, "Now Mr Sheriff, I leave Cornwall to you safe and sound."

Lostwithiel was in a terrible state, its buildings battered and its people starving. Sickness was rife: the results of the natural waste produced by 10,000 soldiers had taken its toll. The surrounding land was in ruins with nothing to harvest and St Bartholomew's Church had been damaged and desecrated. The Great Hall was in ruins and most of the records had been destroyed. The town was important as the centre of Duchy and Stannary matters and its destruction seemed to be a deliberate attempt to remove all vestige of Cornish identity. There was loud cheering as the King rode through the town. There was satisfaction too, the people had taken their revenge on the defeated army and that provided a measure of consolation.

"They should hang him," announced Jabe. He'd heard of Essex's escape. "I'd string up the other two buggers as well. How the hell could they do that?"

Essex's behaviour was deplored by many on both sides and the Royalist pamphleteers in Oxford were quick to mock him as they wrote, "We desire to know the reason why the rebels voted to live and die with the Earl of Essex since the Earl of Essex hath declared he'll not live and die with them." Essex tried to excuse his actions but they were hollow words and when he offered himself up for trial many hoped he would hang but in a show of unity the Parliamentary leaders not only refused to court martial them: they re-affirmed their confidence in him and even thanked him for his services. Essex had directed the blame towards others – at Waller who'd failed to rescue him and at Colonel John Weare who was arrested and sent to the Tower of London.

With Cornwall safe, the King ordered Sir Richard Grenville to join Goring in an attack on Balfour's Parliamentarian Cavalry as it retreated from Plymouth to Lyme but Grenville had other ideas. He chose to ignore the order: he'd a matter to settle at Saltash and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September he entered the town and immediately set about finding those who'd helped Balfour escape. Those he suspected were questioned and then hanged, not always in that order. With his version of justice concluded, he garrisoned the town, seized what supplies he needed and crossed into Devon. The treatment of his fellow countrymen at Saltash disgusted even those who fought with him.

"I can understand it," said William. "If he'd let it fester then it could've got worse."

Jabe frowned. "Well that's all very well but Balfour's escaped and it's down to Grenville – if he hadn't stopped at Saltash he'd have caught him."

"Praps," said William, "but if you ask me, it made sense to take Saltash. Anyway, it'll put the wind up they lot in Plymouth. Besides, why didn't Goring have a go at them on his own."

Grenville had to explain his actions but he was adamant that he was right. It was not the last time that this truculent man would place local issues ahead of the national cause.

The King returned to Lord Mohun's house at Boconnoc where he stayed for a couple of nights before moving back to join Joseph Jane at Liskeard. It was an honour appreciated by the staunchly Royalist town. While Lostwithiel lamented its fate, the remainder of Cornwall celebrated the remarkable victory: pleased to be safe again. The posse was disbanded and life began to return to normal. John was in the King's regiment when it left Liskeard and marched to Tavistock. The soldiers set up camp and waited for those who had returned home to celebrate the great victory. It would prove to be a long wait. They'd saved Cornwall and that was what really mattered. Charles's army left to join the siege at Plymouth.

William was already there, watching as they marched in, trying to spot John. "Bleddy Hell," said Jabe. "If I was in there and saw this lot I'd be in my boat and off to sea." The Parliamentary defenders were certainly demoralised. They'd gone from thinking the war was over to a situation where the numbers at their door were the greatest there had ever been. It was their lowest point.

The Queen had warned Charles not to waste time in front of Plymouth but despite his huge army, he made no move. It was a mistake. It gave the defenders time to reorganise under their new leader, John Robartes. Despite his ill-founded advice to invade Cornwall and his ignominious escape from Fowey, Robartes had been appointed Governor of Plymouth and had immediately set out to redeem his reputation. He'd inherited a town low on confidence but within a short time he'd rebuilt the people's self-respect and moulded them into a fighting force. Stories of Cornish retribution after Castle Dore had increased their resolve.

John was a defector and at first his every move was watched but in the confusion of the post-battle celebrations his transfer from the King's Army to Sir Richard Grenville took place with no explanation. He was now a member of the Cornish Royalist Army.

## Chapter 77

As the remnants of Essex's Army trudged into Devon, the attacks ceased but food was difficult to find and at Okehampton the people refused to provide any until Skippon threatened them. Even then, it was sold at hugely inflated prices.

The brutality inflicted as they left Cornwall had taken its toll and many had died. Now, natural hazards began to play their part and sickness, exhaustion and exposure took over where the cruelty had left off. Safe from the sticks and stones, their fear gave way to anger. Yes, they'd antagonised the people but that was what happened in war but the cruelty meted out by the Cornish was out of all proportion. They swore that one day they would take their revenge.

When the pathetic force reached Poole there were just 1,000 survivors of the 6,000 who'd left Fowey. Perhaps the number would increase as the stragglers came in but it was clear it would be a small proportion of the army that marched to the west. The battle of Lostwithiel would be remembered as the worst Parliamentary defeat of the war and the 12<sup>th</sup> September was declared a Day of Humiliation.

As news of Essex's defeat spread, the Parliamentary towns in the West Country rushed to strengthen their defences. At Barnstaple the efforts were in vain. On the 11<sup>th</sup> September, Goring attacked and recaptured it for the King. Just Plymouth, Lyme, Taunton and Weymouth remained in Parliamentary hands.

## Chapter 78

The Plymouth defences were shrouded in mist. The King was aware that the town had stood firm against everything thrown at it so far but after his success at Lostwithiel, anything was possible. More men gathered at Saltash thanks to the efforts of the Provost Marshals, John Taverner and David Hawes. They'd been busy rounding up Royalist deserters and recalling Cornish troops to their units.

Jabe laughed, "I've just heard the trained bands are over at Mount Edgcumbe."

"So?" replied William.

"They still won't leave Cornwall and it seems that the King's a bit teasy. He reckons they're more concerned with protecting their homes than fighting for him. Bit like the way I feel."

The King called for Plymouth's surrender but a resolute John Robartes replied with, "Never." They were now reinforced with a few men from Essex's Army who'd recovered from their injuries, and from the men from the ships in Cattewater. Even so, Robartes only had about 150 big guns, 2,500 foot and 400 horse to cover the four-mile line of defence.

The 10<sup>th</sup> September began with a heavy bombardment. When it ceased, fifteen thousand soldiers moved towards the town and as the drums beat out the order, the Royalists poured down the hills to attack the north-west defences: from Stonehouse to Pennycomequick. For the first time, William and John were fighting together, not side-by-side but in the same Royalist Army.

"Fat lot of good our guns did," said Jabe, "the bastards are still throwing everything at us." William didn't reply, he was too busy trying to find the lead shots he'd dropped.

The Royalists surged towards the redoubts but the defenders held firm and many of the attackers fell to their musket shot. Casualties were mounting on both sides but there was still no breakthrough and the King reluctantly signalled the recall.

"Jabe, you alright?" shouted William when they'd retreated to a safe position. "I saw you fall and thought you'd bought it."

"Yeah, I'm alright," replied the little man, "I tripped but was soon up. Robartes has got them back into shape again, we should've attacked sooner."

William nodded, "He's done well but you're right, the King should've caught them with their breeches down." Jabe looked surprised, coming from William that was harsh criticism.

Despite the failures of previous sieges Charles expected a breakthrough. It hadn't happened but he was certain that Robartes couldn't hold out for much longer. He sent another summons inviting him to surrender.

"Born optimist your King," said Jabe.

"Your King too," replied William.

Robartes' reply was succinct. Charles unfolded the message and read it aloud, "The town of Plymouth is kept for the service of Parliament."

"I aren't surprised," said William. "After Castle Dore they'd rather fight to the last man than give in. Besides, they aren't going to trust the King, not after Lostwithiel and Launceston. They're bound to say he let it happen."

The King planned another assault but wiser and more experienced heads counselled against it. He was persuaded that too many lives would be lost in another futile attempt. William was relieved. He'd been here before and had no wish to throw away his life on such a reckless venture. Reluctantly, Charles abandoned his plan and on the 14<sup>th</sup> September he and Prince Maurice left Plymouth for Tavistock. Before William marched off, he found his son. He shook his hand and embraced him. John watched as he disappeared from view: the events of recent weeks had brought them closer together.

Sir Richard Grenville had been forgiven for his delay at Saltash and was now the commander of the Royalist forces before Plymouth. He'd been left with about 800 men, the New Cornish Army as it was being called. It faced a town back up to fighting strength. He concentrated his men at Plympton and Saltash and began recruiting.

Many of the Cornish hadn't returned to Prince Maurice's Army and the King was suspicious that Grenville was now recruiting them. Despite the order that they be sent back to join Prince Maurice they didn't re-appear.

## Chapter 79

By the 23<sup>rd</sup> September the King was at Chard. His orders of no plundering had applied to Cornwall and he now showed little concern as his army took what it needed from the countryside. Back in Cornwall, it was ploughing time and the farmers complained to Grenville that the Royalist Army had left with many of their horses and oxen. Unless they were returned, next season's harvest was at risk. There was little Grenville could do.

William nudged Jabe and pointed as two prisoners were brought into camp. They claimed to be deserters, ready to change sides. The King stood in the shadows and listened as they were questioned, unconvinced at what he heard. The Royalist captain stroked his chin and directed his attention to one of them. "Your face...it seems familiar," he said, "and if I'm not mistaken your voice is not that of a common soldier. It seems to me you've other plans in mind. I think you may be spies."

The man didn't reply but his colleague, the younger of the two, was quick to spot the danger and blurted out, "Not me Sir. I'm an infantryman. He made me come with him."

His colleague rounded on him, "Shut up you fool."

The captain laughed, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, you see the dilemma I'm in." He was toying with them. "I don't know who to believe. I think to be safe we'll hang you both." He paused, "Unless of course, you can be of help to us." The younger man continued to plead his innocence as they were led outside and paraded in front of a group of officers. A short distance away a rope had been thrown over the branch of a tree. William hovered in the background, listening.

The sight of the rope swinging in the breeze was too much for the infantryman. He answered every question put to him, about the Parliamentary Army, its strength and location. "And I tell you this," he said. "If Parliament wins then the King won't be needed, they're going to get rid of the monarchy." The other man remained silent.

The Royalist captain thanked him for his candour and nodded towards the tree, "Well now, it just remains to decide who will be first."

"Can you believe it? If they win then they're going to keep the King out of government."

"Spouse he'd do the same to them."

"But he's the King, they can't do that. Who'd run the country?"

"Parliament I spose, Praps it would be for the best."

William looked at him in disgust. "You're as bad as the bleddy enemy." He stormed off to find other company.

## Chapter 80

Sir Richard Grenville was determined to take Plymouth: to succeed where even the King had failed. His New Cornish regiments were growing. Recruits and returning deserters crossed at Saltash or made their way over one of the bridges further up river, all willing volunteers now that a Cornishman was back in command. Whether they were fighting for the King or for Cornwall was not clear.

John had developed a grudging respect for Grenville. He'd heard that he was a hard man but there was no denying that the Cornish soldiers respected him. "You don't want to fall foul of him," he was warned. "Stay on his right side and you'll be alright. Put one foot wrong and he'll treat you like his prisoners."

There was no doubt what he would do to John if he half-suspected that he'd fought for the enemy, he would string him up or send him out to this Lydford Jail everyone was talking about. "So what's it like then, seen it have you?"

"You don't want to go there Boy, and I wouldn't start asking questions about it if I were you. I should know 'cause I was there on guard duty for a while. Even the name's enough to give you the shits. Tis a bleak place out Dartmoor way. There's nowhere to run out there. They're in this old castle building where they get a taste of his treatment. Lydford Law they do call it, hang first and judge after. Only they don't hang many, they torture them or starve them to death. I remember one soldier, young lad he was. I don't know whether he couldn't or wouldn't tell them what they wanted but they put a wire around his neck and twisted it till his eyes were bulging fit to burst. There was blood gushing from his neck and mouth and by the time they'd finished with him his head was nearly off."

John winced at the thought of it – and at his own situation.

"There's only two ways out of that place. Either feet first or they get somebody to pay Grenville a ransom. Mind you, I've known him to take the money and still not let them out."

John had heard enough and he wondered off to clean his musket and to ponder his next move. The risk of being recognized played on his mind and he knew he had to get away soon. Just then, a shout went up and all eyes turned towards the town gate at Mount Gould. The Parliamentarians were up to something but from that distance it was difficult to make out what it was. Then someone shouted, "They're going to hang the poor bugger." John could see now. A man was being pulled up on a rope. He was kicking and twisting in desperation, the noose becoming tighter with every movement. There was no one there to pull on his ankles to send him quickly on his way and the poor man suffered a slow death by strangulation. At last, all movement stopped except for the gentle sway of the body.

The same man who'd painted a vivid picture of Lydford was quick with the news. "It was Joseph Grenville, Sir Richard's boy or so they say. They reckon he was there as a spy. Poor bugger was only 16 years old."

As the days passed, one or two began to show an interest in the Cornishman who'd appeared from nowhere. Denzil Rees, from Redruth, couldn't restrain his curiosity and pressed for an answer. "So John Ennor, where're you from? No one here's fought with you before." John had expected the question and was well aware that his life depended on his answer. His inquisitor cut a strange figure: stocky, mean looking and slightly immature.

"I'm from down near Truro," said John, "my father fights in Mohun's regiment and my brother was killed at Stratton."

Rees snapped back, "I asked about you, not your kin."

John was being pushed and he stammered, "I...I'm just turned seventeen – this is the first time I've fought."

The man looked him up and down. He nodded, "I guess that explains it."

Rees clearly had doubts and John was aware of the rumblings. Some even avoided him, afraid of being implicated. His talkative friend did manage to whisper that there was a rumour going around. Rees had suggested he was a traitor and was trying to find out more about him. John had made up his mind: he would make his move that night. He knew that if he ran for Plymouth then he could find himself on the end of a rope – like Joseph Grenville. No, he would head the other way, away from the town and then to the north of the county where he was more likely to find sympathy for his Parliamentary views.

John gripped his musket: he was nervous. The moon was brighter than he'd hoped but he couldn't delay, it had to be tonight. As he glanced around, he was aware of someone in the shadows.

"John Ennor, it's good to see you again."

The voice was familiar but he couldn't make out who it was. Recognition was followed by despair.

"Tregonning, what are you doing here?"

"More to the point Lad, what's a rebel like you doing fighting for good King Charles? You must have had quite a change of heart."

"My...my father convinced me to join up."

"You're a liar boy, I asked about you and was told you came a cropper at Fowey. Should've been strung up but got let off. Seems like you've led a charmed life but I think you'll hang this time. There's no King to save you now and Grenville will have great delight in seeing you on your way. Did you see his relative swing last week? He'll be pleased to return the gesture."

Neither man realised that someone else was listening and from the shadows came another voice. "So I was right, you're a little shit who fights with the English." Denzil Rees had been standing within earshot and now saw his chance. "I think Sir Richard should know of this."

"Hold there soldier," whispered Tregonning, "if anyone's going to get the credit it's me." John saw his chance but he had to move fast. He drew his knife and darted towards Rees, the smaller of the two men. Rees stepped to his side and tried to grab him but John was quick. He sidestepped and slid by, just as he'd done so often in the hurling. The considerable bulk of Tregonning now confronted him but a half-turn took him back the other way and again he faced Rees, arms outstretched.

"We've got you Ennor," shouted Rees, "drop the knife."

He tried to dive passed but Rees grabbed his coat and in a desperate attempt to break free John swung his arm. A jet of blood spurted from Rees' throat and John watched as the man slumped to the ground. By the time that John had recovered his wits it was too late. Others had arrived and he was wrestled to the ground. As someone ran to find an officer, Tregonning slipped quietly away.

There were some who suspected John of treachery but only Tregonning knew for sure and he was keeping quiet. Murder was the charge and for that there was only one penalty. He looked up at a noose swinging in the breeze: they would hang him soon.

## Chapter 81

The King left Chard on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and marched to the east. With him were Prince Maurice and the remnants of the Old Cornish regiments. Many of those missing were farmers. For them, the harvest was much more important than any war. Many others simply had no stomach for another trip upcountry and joined Richard Grenville's regiments.

As they trudged the earth track, William was in reflective mood. "You know what, I reckon there's less than a thousand of us left. Tis all up with the Cornish Army." William had been doing a rough count at mealtime and the number of desertions after Castle Dore, and since, was clear to see. I reckon Maurice is paying the price for letting Essex get into Cornwall. We should've been there, helping Grenville to block his way. But no, we had to run the other way to meet up with the King.

"Well I spose it worked out all right in the end," said Jabe, "I mean we kicked their asses at Fowey."

"Maybe, but we should've stopped him before he reached Cornwall. That's what Hopton would've done if he was in charge. Maurice doesn't give a damn about we Cornish." William was breathing heavily and his friend knew that this was one of those moments when it was best to say nothing.

It was a calmer William who continued the conversation. "Anyway, they say we're off to join with Prince Rupert, to form one big army. He was quiet for a moment or two and then he said, "Tid'n the same now." William motioned with his head. "There's few enough of us left, not enough to make me feel I'm amongst friends." William had considered joining Grenville at Plymouth but he'd missed his chance and now he felt uneasy about being so far from home. "I don't know about you, but I aren't keen to go any further. I've seen enough foreign parts to last me a lifetime."

"Not thinking of running, are you?"

"Well I joined a Cornish Army not a rag-bag crew like this."

Jabe looked around to see if anyone was listening. "I don't know, we could end up with a rope around our necks."

"Look," said William, "the worst they do is haul you back and make you fight. I can't see them hanging good men."

Jabe was still worried but the thought of home was persuasive. He laughed, "Well, to be honest my feet are bleddy sore and I wouldn't mind missing the fun if you think we could make it. I'm certainly not going on without you, there'd be no one to tuck me in at night."

William looked around. "I reckon that's it then, we'll wait till dark and head back."

"Right," said Jabe in a voice still tinged with doubt. "We'll eat first."

## Chapter 82

The departure of the main Royalist force from Plymouth left Robartes feeling easier: if they could hold off an entire army then Grenville's puny force should be no problem.



John wondered why he'd not been dealt with. Robartes had crossed the Tamar with about 700 soldiers and captured Millbrook and Saltash. He felt a surge of hope but why would Robartes worry about him. He was to hang and that was the end of it. He settled back to think of the mess he'd made of his life. Now, with death staring him in the face, he found himself hoping that there was a God and, if so, that he would have mercy on him.

Grenville's response to Robarte's action was immediate. He sent a strong force to attack Millbrook and quickly won it back. Saltash was next but that was more difficult. His first attempt was repelled but he appealed to his men to double their efforts. The enemy was in Cornwall and whatever the cost he had to be driven out. It worked and within a few days he managed to land a detachment. It drove at the enemy and prepared the ground for a larger force. Before long, they had the upper hand and Robartes had been thwarted. A few escaped by boat back to Plymouth, about 300 were killed and another 300 captured. Saltash was back in Royalist hands.

Sir Richard Grenville now showed the extent of his brutality. He'd called on the Parliamentary force to surrender but they'd repeatedly refused and under the rules of war he was entitled to kill them. No one doubted the correctness of this but most officers didn't enforce it. This though, was Sir Richard Grenville and they would receive no mercy from him. His own officers asked him not to carry out his threat but he ignored them and began the arrangements to hang all 300 prisoners. There were still men who placed honour and decency above expediency and one of Grenville's officers was so reviled that he sent word to Prince Maurice, warning him of what was about to take place. It took an order from the King to prevent the executions being carried out. Without it, the hangings would've taken place. In Sir Richard's eyes it would've been fitting revenge for Joseph Grenville.

Stories of Grenville's atrocities were circulating freely and even some of the Devon Commissioners were concerned at his methods. They met him to discuss their misgivings but he told them that such measures were necessary in wartime. They had to consider the wider picture and leave the fighting to him. Not only did he receive their blessing but they voted additional funds for the siege at Plymouth and made him High Sheriff of Devon. One of his first actions was to hang the High Constable.

John was resigned to his fate. He knew that Grenville liked nothing better than a hanging and the taunting and cruelty from the guards was unbearable. Maybe the delay was a part of his punishment: it certainly gave him time to reflect on his short life, the good and the bad.

"Mr Ennor, good morning." John looked up at the smiling face of Nat Tregonning. "You may be surprised to learn that I've used my influence with the general to save you from the noose. I fear that I must be getting soft in my old age."

John's nerves were on edge. Tregonning was playing with him and he guessed he would hang anyway. "So what's the catch?" he asked, "What do you want from me?"

"I told Sir Richard that you provided a good service to Mr Treleigh and that no doubt your former employer would be grateful to have you returned to continue the work."

John twitched nervously. Clearly, he'd not heard of Treleigh's death, nor that it was he who'd wielded the blade.

"And?"

“You’re to be released under my charge. We’ll return to Cornwall and work together, to seek out those loyal to Parliament. But you’re right, there is a condition, I’ve told him you’ve some important information – names and suchlike.”

“I don’t know any names.”

“But you have the book,” snapped Tregonning.

“I won’t do it, I’d rather hang.”

Tregonning smirked. “I half expected that. I’ve convinced the good general that a stay in Lydford will loosen your tongue. You’ve heard of Lydford, no doubt. You’ll either join me or it’ll be your end.” Nat Tregonning looked back as he left, “Compared to that place, hanging’s a mercy.”

### Chapter 83

William and Jabe wandered back from Chard, avoiding the roads wherever possible. They slept in the woods and ate berries and the occasional rabbit. Each time they climbed a hill they expected to see Cornwall but their powers of navigation were not good and they concluded that they could be anywhere. William was the more positive. “Follow the sun. That’s all we gotta do, follow the sun and one of these days we’ll hit the Tamar.”

They were on open ground when the sight of men on horseback took them by surprise. “Keep your head down,” whispered William but it was too late, they’d been spotted. It was Grenville’s troops on the lookout for deserters.

“Going home are we lads?” The officer stared down, daring them to offer an explanation.

Jabe spoke first. “We’re heading for Plymouth Sir, to join up with Sir Richard Grenville.”

The officer nodded, “I’m sure you are, is that why you’re heading for Tavistock?”

Jabe looked suitably puzzled. “I know what it must look like but the truth is we don’t know where we are.”

“Well we can help you there,” replied the soldier. “We’re going to take you on a slightly different route.” He nodded for them to join the dozen or so others, a mixture of civilian recruits and soldiers with the same intention as them. “We’re going Plymouth way: I hope that suits you.”

“I’m sorry,” said William, “I shouldn’t have talked you into it. Sir Richard’s none too keen on deserters.”

Jabe shrugged, “Don’t worry about it. Just leave it to me.” William shook his head.

As soon as they arrived at the Royalist camp outside Plymouth the men were taken before a senior officer who was to decide their fate. They knew Grenville needed more troops and was unlikely to hang them but this officer was in no mood to deal with them leniently.

Jabe raised his hand. “Begging your pardon Sir, may I speak?”

The officer looked at Jabe and waited. “Well go on then,” he snapped.

“Me and the big fellow here, Will Ennor, we’re good Cornishmen. We’ve risked our lives to join Sir Richard. Yeah, we did desert but only because we want to fight under a Cornishman.”

The officer looked at the talkative chap in front of him. Maybe he believed him, either that or he gave him credit for barefaced effrontery. Either way he nodded and told the sergeant to enrol them.

When they were out of earshot William said, “For once I’m grateful for your bullshit.”

The talk at Plymouth was of the Second Battle at Newbury where the Parliamentarians had almost captured the King. The Royalist Army had run away in the dark but for some reason the enemy hadn’t given chase. “We could’ve been part of that,” said William, “if we’d have gone with the King.”

Despite the victory, Parliament had been less than pleased with its army’s performance. One of its leaders, Oliver Cromwell, demanded changes and in December 1644 the House of Commons considered a new Bill – the Self-Denying Ordinance. It meant that officers in the Parliamentary forces would be appointed on merit rather than their social status or military connections. It became law and the Earl of Essex and some others had to step down.

John Ennor knew nothing of this latest news: he was locked away, enjoying the pleasures of Lydford Jail.

## Chapter 84

It was mealtime when William noticed that Jabe was missing. He asked around but no one had seen him since breakfast.

“Maybe he’s pushed off,” someone suggested, “either that or he’s found someone better looking than you.” William didn’t laugh, it was unlike his friend to go anywhere without telling him, especially with food on the table. An hour later he discovered where he was. One of the junior officers told him he was being held on a charge of murder.

“Murder?” shouted William, “What the hell do you mean? Who’s he murdered? I want to see him.”

The officer snapped back, “You can’t, now push off or you’ll see him soon enough, you’ll be in there with him.” William slouched back across the camp. He picked up his musket and began cleaning it but his mind was elsewhere. He didn’t understand, it had to be a mistake. It was getting dark but he knew he wouldn’t sleep.

Sir Richard Grenville was not in the best of moods. He was not concerned about Jabe but one of his men had been taken from duty to be questioned on a civilian matter. He’d considered sending the official away but thought better of it: he already had enough battles with officialdom. Jabe hadn’t tried to defend himself and had been told to prepare to meet his maker. He slumped back, resigned to his fate: it was to be the gallows.

News that Jabe was to hang spread quickly through the camp and some of the men urged William to do something, “He’s your mate,” they said, “talk to someone, talk to Grenville.”

William shook his head, “What the hell can I do? They won’t listen to the likes of me.” It was hopeless but he knew he had to try and he set off to find the captain. Nervously, he approached his quarters and asked if he could talk to Sir Richard Grenville. The officer shook his head, “You’ll have to make do with me: I’m not going to interrupt Sir Richard for something so trivial.”

William's reaction was immediate and fierce. "Trivial is it, well let me tell you that me and the others don't think it's bloody trivial, not when one of us is going to be strung up. If you can't do better than that I'm going to see Grenville."

Captain James motioned to the two men standing nearby: they rushed over to stand each side of William. "That's enough. It's Sir Richard Grenville to you and if you don't show more respect then you'll hang with the dwarf."

William sighed: his outburst had made things worse. Looking suitably contrite he said, "I'm sorry Sir, I got carried away. Tis the worry of it all: it gets me fired up. See, I don't think you know the strength of feeling in the camp. If I don't go back with some sort of answer then there'll be a group of men showing even less respect than me."

The captain pondered for a moment. "Well you tell them this from me. I'll not accept interference from anyone and any trouble will be dealt with firmly." Then he paused, "You can also tell them I'll do what I can for one of you to see the prisoner." William could do no more: he'd pushed the man as far as he dared.

Later that day the captain sent for William. He told him that Sir Richard Grenville had agreed that he could see Jabe. It would be a short meeting in the company of two guards and an officer. William was hardly prepared for the sight that met him as he entered the cell. Jabe was slumped in the corner, in chains and very subdued. It was the little boy again: the one on Lansdown Hill, and he knew at that moment that he loved him as a brother. "Jabe, what the hell's going on? They say you killed a man."

Jabe didn't respond, perhaps because of the officer, but then he nodded. "There's no point me lying. I knew they'd catch up with me one day. I've been looking over my shoulder ever since it happened."

"But why Boy? You must have had a reason. You've gotta tell them otherwise they're going to hang you."

Jabe shrugged. "That official, they won't take my word against his. See, it was one of the gentry I killed, if you could call him that."

"Look, they haven't given me long, you've gotta tell me what happened and I'll try and argue the case for you."

William had ten minutes to gather what he could before he was told his time was up. He gripped Jabe by the shoulder. "I promise I'll do what I can, just don't give up." It was clear he already had.

The conversation in their part of the camp was of little else that day. Most feared a hanging but William and a few others spent the time arguing about what to do. Some even talked of a rescue attempt but they knew it was futile, Grenville would hang them all. When the news arrived it was bad: Jabe was to be executed the following day. William said nothing: he slung his musket to one side and strode off to find Captain James.

"There's nothing more I can do. The case has been heard and a decision made. He'll hang at first light."

After the previous encounter, William knew he had to control his temper, he swallowed hard and replied in a calm but determined voice. "I know what you said about me going to Sir Richard over your head Sir, and I know what you threatened if I disobeyed, but this is something I gotta do. Jabe's a friend to me, a friend to us all, and if I don't do what I can to save him then that friendship's worth nothing. I'm sorry Sir, but unless you'll plead on his behalf then I'll have to risk my life to do so."

Captain James looked at him and shook his head. "You're a stubborn bugger Ennor." He thought for a few seconds and then told William to wait there until he returned.

He was back before long. "Right Ennor, you've just five minutes, five minutes to convince me why he shouldn't hang."

"Five minutes to try and save a man's life is short enough Sir, but I thank you for it." Another person stood just out of sight and it occurred to William it might be Sir Richard himself. The captain leaned back in his chair and swung his feet onto a stool. "Now Ennor, tell me what you know and make it quick."

"I only know what Jabe has told me but I believe it with all my heart. He won't defend himself because he thinks the official's word will be believed against his and that if he doesn't hang then his family will suffer."

Captain James frowned, "Why would his family suffer?"

"The man he killed was from an important family, they're out for revenge and Jabe fears that if he doesn't hang, they'll kill his wife and children."

"So what do you know of the killing, did he talk of that?"

"He did Sir, and in his place, I'd have done the same. The man raped his sister and when she threatened to tell about it, he had her killed. What would you have done Sir?"

"Don't be impertinent," snapped the captain, "I've been good enough to listen so don't presume on my patience." After a moment's silence the Captain looked at him and nodded, "It was a fair question, you know what I'd have done. Now, have you anything more to tell me?"

"No Sir, I wish I had. That's all I know. I'm begging you to show some mercy."

The captain paused before replying. "You've given us a problem. If the general releases him then he'll have to deal with this tiresome official but if we hang him then I'll forever have doubts. I've hanged many men in my time and not given it a thought. It's the way in wartime, what must be done, but I have to say this case concerns me. All I can say is that I'll discuss it with the general. Whatever the outcome you've done your best. I wish I had such a loyal friend."

When William returned to the camp the questions came from all sides but all he could say was, "I don't know what's going to happen, we've been heard and there's no more to be done."

Many eyes were fixed on the gibbet at daylight but there was no body swinging in the breeze and it was a tired looking Jabe that joined them for breakfast. There was to be no hanging. Captain James had questioned him into the night and the story had stood up. The official was sent back to Penryn with the warning that any reprisals would bring a troop of soldiers about their ears. For a man who'd been so close to the noose, Jabe ate a hearty breakfast.

## Chapter 85

John had been at Lydford for about two months, he was young and fit, better able to withstand the hardships than many but even he was beginning to wilt. He'd watched men die and knew that he couldn't hold out much longer. He thought about what was on offer and asked to see Tregonning.

“So John Ennor, are you not happy with your quarters?”

John wanted to spit in his face but contented himself with a whispered response.

Tregonning laughed, “Now is that anyway to talk to a man who has not only saved your life but has also offered you a job? By the way, things have altered slightly. While you and I have been away, Mr Treleigh has suffered from our lack of protection. He’s been killed so will no longer have use of our services. I’m sure you’d like to join me in praying for his soul.” John didn’t react. “No? I thought not. Now look, you and I are kindred spirits but your future is much less certain than mine. The good general has heard of your activities at Lostwithiel and despite my assurances he’s a mind to hang you after all. Luckily, I still have his order for your release and if you’ll co-operate, I’ll use it now. Any delay could be fatal – for you that is. So, what do you say? You can remain here and await the hangman or together we can seek work from whoever will pay. It can surely be no worse than you’ve done in the past when you seemed destined to work for the side not to your liking.”

John had little choice. “It matters not to me now who I work for, just as long as I can leave this hell hole while I still have some strength.”

“Then we’ll leave now and you’ll let me have that book.”

## Chapter 86

William ambled back from the latrines. He’d heard that John was at Lydford but more than that he’d not been told. At least he’s safe, he thought. He’d no idea what the place was like. He sat on the ground, eager to tell Jabe the news he’d just picked up. “I’ve just heard about Archbishop Laud.”

“Archbishop who?” asked Jabe.

“Laud...Archbishop Laud, one of they that started all this. You must have heard about him. He’s spent four years in the Tower, charged with treason.”

“So, what’s this news then?” interrupted one of the other soldiers.

“Well, seems like the court couldn’t decide so Parliament did it for them, they took his head off at Tower Hill last week.” No one seemed upset, Laud was against the Puritans but many on the King’s side also hated him.

“Seems like it’s a day for news,” said one of the other soldiers. “Heard about Parliament’s new army, have you?”

“What new army?” Jabe was disappointed that he’d missed out on two pieces of news.

“From what I hear, the armies of Essex, Manchester and Waller have combined into one. They call it the New Model Army. They’re all dressed in red uniforms and led by army men.” The story was correct. It was an English army: something that Parliament hoped would appeal to the patriots. “They say Sir Thomas Fairfax is to lead them with someone called Oliver Cromwell as second-in-command.”

“Black Tom,” murmured one of his colleagues. “They call Fairfax, Black Tom.” Cromwell was less well known. He was a Member of Parliament and an exception to the rules of the Self-Denying Ordinance. The Parliamentary Army was now on a professional footing with regular food, supplies and pay.

Grenville's Army had grown to about 5,000 foot and 1,000 horse, the extra numbers a result of rounding up runaway soldiers and signing new recruits. William and Jabe hadn't been alone in declining the King's kind offer to march to the east.

Jabe lay on his bed, moaning. He'd been laid low with sickness and diarrhoea and wouldn't be a part of Grenville's next raid. William was tired of his moaning. "Will, I'm some poorly. My guts feel awful."

"Oh 'ush your grumbling, you'll be back annoying me soon enough."

"I don't think so, I reckon it'll do for me. I'd have preferred the hangman's noose to this."

"Where's the dwarf?" snapped the officer.

"He's got the shits: can't move far from the latrines."

The officer nodded. "Right, tell him to keep it to himself. I don't want him sharing that."

The attack began on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, at four locations. It involved a large force of horse and infantry.

That day and the next there was heavy rain and they made little progress but when it cleared, the attack began again with an artillery bombardment along the length of the northern defences. Maudlyn Fort was put under heavy attack but the defenders managed to hold on and many of the Royalist attackers were killed.

Afterwards, William told Jabe how it had gone. "I was in the lot that captured one of the forts, Little Pennycome something or other."

"Pennycomequick I reckon," said Jabe. "Like the place down my way."

"That's it," said William, "When they came back at us, we lost about 50 men. Some of us were taken prisoner but I managed to pretend I was one of them and I escaped. How're you feeling?"

"Oh I'm alright," After a few seconds he said, "Will."

"What now." William was tired and ready for sleep.

"I heard what you'd done, how you risked your life by pleading for me. I...I've never had a friend like you before. I want to say thank you but it don't seem enough."

"It's enough for me that you didn't hang. Now, have you got any more little secrets that I should know about?"

They settled for the night, both had moist eyes.

## Chapter 87

John Ennor and Nat Tregonning had no problems passing through the Royalist patrols as they rode from Lydford into Cornwall and then on down to Truro. Despite the long journey there was little conversation

between them and the atmosphere was still strained as they reined in their horses outside the inn by East Bridge. "We'll stop here." It seemed that Tregonning was trying to win him over.

"Suits me well enough, I've got a sore ass."

"Right, you take the horses through to the back and I'll arrange a room."

"A room?" John wasn't used to such luxury, especially after Lydford.

The meal was basic but it filled the gap in his belly and was better than he'd been used to. After a couple of ales they went to their room.

Tregonning spoke first. "We need to talk about how we're going to work together but first we need to settle our differences."

"Differences?" replied John.

Tregonning continued, "It's clear from the journey that there's a huge rift between us and if we're to work together then it must be healed."

"A rift, well what the hell do you expect?"

Tregonning interrupted him, "I'd just ask you to hear me out."

John looked at him hard but then nodded. He would listen.

"No one will pay us a wage but we'll be in the business of selling what information we can gather. It won't be regular employment nor will it be guaranteed but no man will be our master. I plan to keep on my toes, ready to throw in my hat with the winning side. Conviction is good but it won't pay the bills: I'm asking you now if you'll put aside our past differences and join me."

John was sceptical. This was Tregonning, the man who'd pursued him, imprisoned him, made his life a misery. Now he wanted him as a partner. "And if I say no?"

"Then you can leave in the morning and go where you will. You've already fought for both sides, been in prison and almost hanged so I'm sure you'll not starve." John was bemused. There was something about this new Tregonning that was different. "We'll be working for both sides only they won't know it. We'll have to be careful, bloody careful, but it's better than ending up on the losing side. What do you say?"

John was unsure. "See, what I can't understand is why you want me in on it?"

Tregonning paused for thought. "I suppose it's because I know so much about you. I think I can trust you and you can be ruthless if you have to be."

"You mean Denzil Rees," laughed John. "You should know that it was an accident. I'd no intention of slitting his throat."

"I don't mean him," said Tregonning, "that little bastard deserved what he got. I mean James Treleigh."

"Treleigh, when did you know?"



"I knew you'd killed him as soon as I heard what he did to your sister. I'd have done the same. He was a pig of a man and my time with him wasn't pleasant. Now lad, we know all there is to know of each other, do we have a deal?"

John held back, still unsure about this man who'd made his life a misery. After a moment or two he said, "I don't know if I can trust you and I don't like the work."

Tregonning shrugged. "All I can do is to give my word. Anyway, what have you got to lose?"

"Only my neck I suppose and many have been after that for a while." He looked at Tregonning, trying to read the truth from his face. The dislike remained but work would be hard to find and he held out his hand. "Alright, I'll say yes, we'll work together."

Tregonning's demeanour changed immediately. "Good," he said, "I'm delighted. From now on it'll be John and Nat. We'll be firm friends and we can be a guard for each other's back. Now, I've arranged for us to stay here tonight but then it'll be rougher quarters and we may even have to bed down with the horses when the place is full. But it'll be safe, I can promise you that. The landlord's a good friend of mine. By the way, I assume you'll now be willing to share those names with me."

John nodded. "The book, yes, I've got the book but it'll disappoint you. It tells of the man who controls the network of Parliamentary spies but it doesn't name him."

## Chapter 88

The war had dragged on for over two years with the advantage swinging first one way and then the other. Despite his low points, the King was resolute. He would neither quit episcopacy nor the sword that God had given him. The West Country had been his most successful battleground and now he saw the possibility of building on the gains and at the same time, providing a safer haven for his son. Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales and Duke of Cornwall was to be at the head of the new Western Association. In early March 1645, the 15-year-old Prince, together with his council and 300 horse, left Oxford and headed for Bristol. William was delighted that a member of the Royal Family was to be their new leader. He would've preferred the King himself but this was something he could tell his grandchildren.

"He's only a bleddy boy," said Jabe. "What the hell does he know about fighting a war?"

"Well they reckon he's got some sort of committee with him. They're going to help him decide what to do," replied William.

"Sound like a right mess to me," said Jabe, "They'll be clucking away like a load of bleddy woman."

The Prince's Council included some notable men: the Earl of Berkshire, the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Southampton, Lord Capel, Lord Hopton, Sir John Culpeper and Sir Edward Hyde: a mix of military and political advisers but there were constant disagreements both within the group and with the Duchy of Cornwall administrators. News of the bickering spread and Jabe was quick to say, "There you are, I told you so."

It was frustrating for the military commanders and it aggravated the existing ill feeling between them. Goring and Grenville were continually at each other's throats.

When he arrived in Cornwall, the Prince made for Liskeard but his command centres were to be at Launceston and Truro. Apart from his military role he was needed to boost the flagging Royalist cause.

Jabe smiled as one of the men told them that Goring had moved his 3,000 horse and 1,500 foot to Exeter and was about to attack Taunton. "I can't see what's so funny about that," said William.

"You haven't heard the best bit," he said. "He's ordered Berkeley and Grenville to join him and Grenville's told him to bugger off."

Grenville had asked the Prince what right Goring had to issue such orders. He was needed at Plymouth where he could better defend Cornwall. It was a view shared by all his army.

The Prince had told him to consider the wider picture. Goring needed his support and such stubbornness wouldn't be tolerated. Grenville's co-operation needed a direct order from the King but even then he was reluctant to move to the east.

"He isn't happy," said William, "and I don't blame him. It's a bleddy cheek having to take orders from Goring."

"What do you expect," replied Jabe. "Goring's one of them and Grenville's just a Cornishman. Anyway, I'm damned if I want to go charging off upcountry again. I'll stay here and keep the women happy."

William chuckled, "I don't know about happy: laughing I expect."

In late March 1645, Grenville left a small force to keep an eye on Plymouth while he headed for Taunton. He had 3,000 soldiers including William and Jabe. Both would've preferred to have spent the rest of the war at Plymouth, if not there then perhaps in Launceston.

Lord Goring had the support of the Prince and his Council but the endless complaints about him were testing their patience. His men caused havoc around Taunton and before long there was a rising of Clubmen. A deputation met the Prince and warned him that if he didn't sort it out then they would. His promise to write to Goring did little to placate them and they were even more upset when he warned them that such gatherings were against the law.

## Chapter 89

John Ennor and Ned Tregonning had been at the inn for four days: after the first night they had slept in the stables. He still had his doubts about Ned and continued to make excuses about delivering up the book. He'd passed him some bits and pieces that seemed of little importance and while Nat knew the game he was playing, he bided his time.

On the pretext of paying his family a visit, John set out to recover the book from near the old mill. He was relieved to find it still there and after cleaning it off he tucked it inside his clothing. As he rode back up the hill and through his hamlet, his sisters ran out to welcome him. They half dragged him from his horse in their excitement and the three of them went into the cottage. Even his mother seemed pleased that he was safe but the old woman sat in her chair by the fire, pretending to be asleep. When she eventually looked up she made little of him. "Still alive then," was her only comment. John's mother frowned: she too had tired of her mother's evil tongue.

Ruth pleaded with him, "Tell us about the war, did you see many battles?"

“Enough, they’re not something that I wish to rush back to. I saw Father at Fowey: he looked well enough.”

“And Richard, did you see Richard?” asked his mother.

“I didn’t, he was badly injured at Stratton and we’ve heard nothing since. Father fears the worst.”

“A pity it wasn’t you instead of your brother.”

Catherine spun around to face her grandmother, “You evil cow,” she shouted. “You’ve been nothing but trouble since you came here and now you say that. You’re a wicked old witch and I hate you.”

Her mother said nothing, stunned by the news of Richard’s death and the words from her mother.

John looked at the floor. “I’m sorry,” he said, “I’m sorry to bring such news.”

## Chapter 90

### The Siege of Taunton

In April 1645 Grenville joined the attack on Taunton. Sir Joseph Wagstaffe commanded Goring’s men and it needed two members of the Prince’s Council to prevent his generals from fighting each other.

“You can see tis Goring’s fault,” said William. “Lording it over Grenville. I reckon he hates us Cornish.”

“Now I didn’t say nothing about this,” said Jabe, “because I know what your temper’s like but I saw him slap an Irish soldier on the back and tell him he’s worth ten Cornish cowards. I mean, what’s he trying to do?”

“Lucky for him I was somewhere else.”

“Lucky for you too,” added Jabe. “Anyway, Grenville’s hardly talking to him now.”

A fresh order took Goring and his cavalry to Dorset. It relieved the situation but as he left, he made it clear that he was far from happy. Once there, he withdrew from the action claiming ill health. Yet again, Goring had found consolation in his favourite pastime and it took Edward Hyde’s best efforts to prise him from the bottle and back into action.

William knelt behind a hedge in front of Wellington House, weapon at the ready. Musket fire from the windows was heavy and shots kicked up dirt all around him. Jabe was back in a clump of trees removing thorns from his legs. He’d dived through a hawthorn bush and was busy cursing everyone for not warning him. Neither of them saw Grenville fall and the first they knew of it was when they withdrew.

“Bad is it?” asked William.

One of the others nodded. “Pretty bad, could be he’s done for. We managed to drag him back but not before they’d got some shot into him.”

As they reached Taunton, they were told that Grenville had been taken to Exeter. No one seemed to know much more. Amongst the Cornish the mood was low. Grenville was harsh, even sadistic, but he was one of them. Now there was uncertainty whether he would return, even if he would live.

Prince Charles met with his Council to appoint someone to take Grenville's place but the choice of Sir Joseph Wagstaffe brought a mass protest. The Cornish hated the man and they openly stated they wouldn't accept a leader so disliked by Grenville. It was open revolt. William held back, not sure how far they could push it but he eventually added his voice to the protest. "Good man," said Jabe, "they can't hang us all."

William looked pensive, "These buggers can."

At first, the Prince refused to back down but when it became clear that all the Cornish would withdraw, he asked Wagstaffe to step aside. Another conference and it was to be Sir John Berkeley who would take over.

William shook his head: he knew what was going to happen. Grenville had also quarrelled with Berkeley and the men considered him equally unacceptable. The more strident among them declared that they'd got rid of Wagstaffe and they could do the same with Berkeley but this time William refused to join them. He warned them that if they carried on like this they would run out of generals. "After all," he said, "the likelihood of finding an officer who'd not fallen out with Grenville was almost impossible." Berkeley took over and Grenville's forces joined the siege at Taunton.

When William returned from guard duty, Jabe was carving a piece of wood. He was working on the more intricate parts.

"No doubt what that is," said William. "Mind you don't slip and cut off her best bits."

"Lovely isn't she. Tis all done from memory and a bit of help from one of the water carriers. Here, I've been thinking. How many sieges have we been involved in?"

"Don't know, matter do it?"

"No, but I was just wondering how many we've won." William accepted the point without reply. Taunton also looked to be a lost cause.

The men were impatient for news of Grenville but no one seemed to know how he was. William had become the unofficial spokesman and his repeated requests for information reached Berkeley. He was beginning to understand the Cornish bond. "Poorly but recovering, is all they said." William told the others.

With a grin one of them said, "There's a bit less falling out with him away."

At the end of April the Prince and his Council decided that the armies should remain together. Not only that, recruitment from the four western counties was to increase the force to 8,000. William and Jabe were now a part of a predominantly English army, far from home and without their Cornish-born leader. They were disillusioned and desertions began to increase until well over 1,000 had left. William watched as three more sneaked out of camp. He looked at Jabe and frowned, "I'm pissed off," he said.

Jabe knew what he was thinking. "I know what you mean. I hate this bleddy place and I hate the fighting but I can't face that again. We got away with it before but..."

William nodded: he understood his friend's reluctance. "It's just that I can't see what good I'm doing sitting on my ass while Goring makes up his mind what to do. Grenville would've sorted it by now."

Jabe knew that if William was set on leaving, he would go with him but he wasn't happy about it. "Praps if we wait a bit longer. After all, Grenville's getting better and could be back soon."

The shout, "Fight, fight," rang out across the camp and thoughts of desertion were put to one side. A crowd had gathered and Jabe was anxious to see the action.

"Come on, let's see what's going on."

"You go on, I've seen enough fighting to last me a lifetime."

Jabe raced over and pushed his way to the front. A young lad was being pummelled by one of the pikemen, a huge chap who could've fought him with one arm behind his back. The groans from the crowd intrigued William and he strolled over and stood on a bank for a better view. He'd no idea why it had started but it didn't seem like a fair fight to him. He pushed his way through the soldiers to where Jabe was standing.

"Poor little bugger," shouted Jabe, "it should be stopped."

William nodded and stepped forward. "Hold fellow or you'll kill him."

"What's it to you? Keep out of it or you'll get the same."

The young lad was sprawled on the ground, blood streaming from his face, hardly able to see through swollen eyes. William placed his hand on the pikeman's shoulder and shouted, "I said that's enough."

The punch was unexpected, like a kick from a horse. William lay on the ground next to the young lad and the laughter rang out from the assembled mob. "You all right Boy?" he asked. The lad nodded and droplets of blood dripped from his face. In a moment, bets began to be placed, most on the big pikeman but Jabe backed William with the few coins he had. The Cornish farmer slowly rose to his feet and the pikeman raised his fists but William ignored him. He half lifted the young lad and helped him from the action. He knew the pikeman was close behind him and was ready as he lunged, swinging his huge fists. William sidestepped the blow and as the man followed through, he grabbed his clothing and threw him to the ground. He landed with a thud and it was his turn to be winded. William had used the man's own weight to propel him, just as he did when wrestling back home.

The pikeman struggled to his feet and attacked again but William repeated the move: the man hadn't learned. Again and again the pikeman was thrown to the floor and despite his calls for a fair fight, William persisted with his wrestling moves. "You're bleddy game, I'll give you that," shouted William as the man rested on his knees, trying to catch his breath. William towered over him, inviting him to continue, but the pikeman didn't get up. Instead, he aimed a blow at William's groin. Luckily his movements had slowed and a moment of warning had given William time to twist his body and deflect the impact. Fury now took over and all qualms about hitting a man on his knees vanished. William landed a hammer blow and the pikeman hit the ground with a thud. His friends rushed to stop the fight.

Jabe was delighted as he counted his money. "Well done, I earned a trifle there."

William laughed, "If you'd trusted me more, you'd have bet your shirt as well."

The following day, William had to appear before one of the officers on a charge of fighting in camp. He received a lecture on discipline and was told that the next time he could be flogged or hanged. The officer then stood up and winked. He held out his hand and said, "Well done Ennor, I heard what happened."

While Sir Richard Grenville was at Exeter, the Prince's Council met to consider a number of complaints about his behaviour during the siege of Plymouth. There were two main accusations. Firstly, that money collected hadn't been used for military purposes and secondly, that he'd failed to co-operate with the other commanders. In the confines of a military camp nothing remains secret for long and when Grenville's men heard about it they were livid. Once again, William became the spokesperson and was quick to tell his officer how disgusted they were that they chose such a time to raise the matter. He was warned to keep his mouth shut but amongst his own he said, "The bastards should be ashamed. The poor bugger's lying on his sickbed while they're scheming behind his back."

Once the investigation was concluded, three members of the Prince's Council travelled to Exeter to interview Grenville. Despite still being on his sick-bed he put up a strong defence and managed to convince them of his innocence. Not only that, he was given command of the newly formed army of the Prince of Wales. When he returned to active duty it was to lead an army of 6,000 foot and 2,000 horse. At his suggestion, Sir John Berkeley left for Plymouth to take over command of the siege.

Many doubts remained about Grenville's methods and some suggested that his butchery and harsh regime at Lydford had encouraged reprisals from the Parliamentarians. On these counts, William had no argument. "Fair enough," he said, "it's probably true. He's a hard man, they all know that, but by God he gets results and treats us fair."

## Chapter 91

At Truro, Nat and John headed back towards the alehouse down by East Bridge, it was a hot day and they both needed refreshment. As they passed the church, John put his hand to his face.

Tregonning laughed. "You look as though you've seen a ghost. Not the girl is it, the one who looks as though she's pregnant?"

John nodded, "It is. The last time I saw her was July last year."

By the look on your face you've achieved something which I have not, well not as far as I know."

"Maybe but I've no wish to meet her just for the moment."

## Chapter 92

Grenville's promotion was short-lived. The King over-ruled his son and placed Goring in command of the new Western Army. Grenville was to be his major general.

The Cornish were livid. It was not only an affront to Grenville: it was an insult to them and the whole of Cornwall. They knew that it was also doomed to failure.

William and the other men disliked Goring as much as they hated the enemy but things were changing fast and he'd hardly taken command before he was summoned to travel north to face Sir Thomas Fairfax who was threatening Oxford.

Goring wrote to the King. He urged him to let him finish the job at Taunton before he joined him. Prince Charles and the Council also pleaded with the King: it was essential that Taunton fell before he left. The King received neither letter: they were intercepted and passed to Sir Thomas Fairfax.

"Better fit they let the bugger go," was Jabe's considered opinion. "He's more help to the enemy than he is to us."

While Goring waited for a reply, he remained at Taunton but there was little action. Edward Hyde complained to Prince Charles that his general did nothing but drink and play and that his troops plundered the countryside and turned the people against the King. Prince Charles tried to prevent the attacks but nothing changed and thousands of Clubmen banded together to defend their homes.

"If the Prince can't stop Goring's Crew, then maybe they will," said William. "There's thousands of the buggers and I hope they give old Shagnasty a damn good thrashing. They aren't interested in the war: they just want to be left alone to get on with their lives."

The news from Naseby was sketchy but it sounded as though King Charles' side had taken a beating. The men sat on the ground eating their meal as one of the junior officers walked by.

"True, is it Sir?" asked William, "What we hear from Naseby."

The officer nodded, "It is I'm afraid. It was a bad defeat. We were up against their new army."

"And they beat us?" asked one of the men.

The officer gave a rueful smile. "They beat us all right. We lost thousands of men and then they turned on the women, killed hundreds they did. They cut them down as they tried to escape. Those who survived had their faces slashed and their noses slit."

The men had become used to defeat but this was hard to take. The New Model Army had swept everything before it and the losses were terrible. Jabe summed up the situation. "That's it Boys: we won't pull back from this." Then, shaking his head, he said, "And all they lovely women."

The officer nodded, "They reckon they were mainly Irish, but someone heard the shout, "Remember Cornwall you whores."

"Revenge for Lostwithiel," said William. "They promised it and now they got it." The officer didn't argue: it was what everyone was thinking. The defeat ended Royalist hopes.

"And the King," said William. "Did he get away?" Jabe was about to say bugger the King but he kept his tongue.

"Aye," said the officer "he got away. Gone to France I wouldn't wonder."

"That's it then," said Jabe, "there's nothing left to fight for. We may as well go home."

But the King was not in France: he'd headed for Hereford to recruit a fresh army.

## Chapter 93

Despite his anger at losing command, Grenville had lost none of his swagger. He was back to his arrogant ways, bickering with Goring and any other officer who crossed his path.

Jabe looked quizzical. "So what makes us different from Goring? I mean, we take food from the people same as he does."

"I know," said William, "but ours is an official request. If any of us was to take it for ourself then Grenville would have us hanged."

"And laugh as he did it," said Jabe. William chose not to answer. When it came to Grenville, he'd learned to keep his head down and was forever telling Jabe to do the same. His Penryn friend was apt to stray from the line occasionally and he'd no wish to see him strung up. Grenville's men were used to his cruelty but he'd little trouble in retaining their loyalty.

"That's what comes of being a Cornish leader of Cornish soldiers," said William, "He's one of we."

The next move for Grenville and his army was to east Devon, to Lyme, where marauding Parliamentarians were ravaging the countryside. The defences at the coastal town were as strong as ever and Grenville despaired at the comparison with Plymouth.

Sir Thomas Fairfax hadn't chased after the King. Instead, he'd left Naseby and headed for the West Country, to relieve Taunton. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> July he occupied Dorchester and with this news Goring lifted the siege at Taunton and scampered away.

Jabe was all for following Goring's example. He'd heard about the New Model Army and didn't fancy getting too close to it.

"Well we gotta decide pretty quick," said William. "Either we have a go at him or turn and run. Tis no good sitting here."

"Have a go," scoffed Jabe. "We wouldn't stand a chance even if Goring joined us."

"I reckon that's especially if Goring joined us. We don't want nothing more to do with him and his crew."

Grenville's regiment was at Lyme to put down any risings but he knew he'd been sent as a buffer between Fairfax and the west. He complained to the Prince at his lack of adequate numbers but it made no difference and his frustration boiled over. Nevertheless, his decision to head back to Ottery St Mary came as a surprise, as did his resignation!

William pondered on it. "I don't know where that puts us but I reckon we gotta stick together."

"I reckon I'll just go over and ask if I gotta resign as well," said Jabe with a smirk on his face." The officer took the joke well but told him to keep his head down and follow orders.

"I don't reckon they want you to resign. I mean, how're they going to manage without you?"

"Hell Will, you're right but I reckon I'll write it out, just in case."



“How’re you going to do that? You can’t write.”

“You’re a bugger for pickin’ holes. Anyway, at least Grenville’s taking us in the right direction.”

William nodded. “I won’t argue with that but the way Fairfax is moving he’s going to sweep us back into Cornwall and over the end.”

Fairfax reached Beaminster on the 4<sup>th</sup> July and advanced by Crewkerne into the Valley of the Yeo, towards Goring’s Army. He then crossed the river and captured Yeovil. Goring prepared to face him but he’d left his heavy guns at Bridgwater, he would have to manage without artillery.

The outcome was inevitable and when the news from Langport reached Grenville’s ears there was a mixed reaction: concern at the speed of Fairfax’s approach but delight that Goring had had his ass kicked. The defeated Royalists made for north Devon and once there, they began to plunder the countryside. When the news reached Cornwall there was a determination that Goring wouldn’t cross the Tamar.

On the 23rd July Bridgwater fell to Fairfax and in Devon they awaited his arrival, some eager, others not. Prince Charles moved back into Cornwall.

“They reckon Grenville’s some teasy,” announced Jabe. “He’s gotta tell the Prince why he resigned.”

“Now how the hell do you know that?” asked William, “You get your bleddy snout in everywhere.”

“That’s true. It must be my air of authority that does it. I reckon Grenville’s going to take me in with him, in case he needs some support.”

Sir Richard Grenville led his army back over the Tamar and posted his troops along the west bank. He issued orders to stop anyone entering Cornwall and that included Goring.

General Goring wrote to the King at Raglan Castle. He complained about Grenville who he said, had encouraged his troops to desert. He also urged him to order the Royalist forces in the west to combine in Devon, to face Fairfax.

Relationships between the Royalist commanders were atrocious and Prince Charles knew that he had to act quickly: otherwise the war was lost. He summoned Grenville and demanded he account for his actions. Sir Richard was suitably contrite and agreed to serve the Prince in whatever manner he commanded.

As far as William was concerned, the Prince was talking to the wrong man, it was Goring who was out of order. “I’m sick of us taking the blame. Grenville’s no worse than him. Why isn’t it him getting a bollocking? Tis all a case of who you are and where you’re from.”

“And who you know,” said Jabe. “Goring’s a friend of the King so he’ll get away with murder.”

In fact the Prince did speak with his other officers. He told them that he expected better co-operation and that there was no way that they would defeat Fairfax if they continued to quarrel. The Parliamentary leader had everyone on edge and there was worse to come, after he’d taken Sherborne and Bath he turned his attention towards his major target – Bristol.

## Bristol Regained

It was increasingly clear that Plymouth wouldn't fall and in a rare show of co-operation, Goring and Grenville agreed that most of the men in the blockade there should be transferred to Goring's Army: new recruits would replace them.

"Sounds like they've kissed and made up," said Jabe. "Grenville and Goring have agreed to work together."

William was sceptical. "I don't trust old Shagnasty, I reckon he was drunk when he agreed to that."

Jabe laughed. "Well I'll give it two days." He was right, they were soon back at each other's throat.

"I reckon they got some sort of death wish," said William, "Here's Fairfax breathing down our necks and they silly buggers keep falling out. I reckon we'd stand a better chance if Goring changed sides."

On the 5<sup>th</sup> August the King issued an order to the Prince's Council. If the Prince of Wales was considered to be in any danger he was to immediately leave for France. Hopton and Hyde were dismayed: they knew his departure would be taken as a sign that all hope was lost. They replied that a ship had been prepared and would leave as soon as they considered it necessary.

By mid-August, Fairfax was facing Bristol. Prince Rupert had asked for help from the Western Association but Goring had replied saying that his army was disintegrating and that he was in no position to help. The letter never arrived: it had been intercepted by Fairfax who'd been delighted to learn that there would be no threat from the west. As soon as his army was in position, he summoned the city to surrender.

The inevitable refusal was quickly followed by a heavy bombardment but the walls stood firm and it seemed certain that it would be a long siege. News from around the country was not good and the Royalists inside the city began to doubt the wisdom of further resistance. After all, they were well aware of the possible penalty for a refusal to surrender. When Prince Rupert asked for terms, Sir Thomas Fairfax could hardly believe it. He'd expected the city to hold out for three weeks or more. At first, he suspected a ploy but Rupert quickly agreed to the conditions and ceded control.

For Royalists everywhere the surrender of Bristol was a catastrophe, there was utter despair across the country and many saw it as the end. King Charles was furious and immediately despatched a note to Rupert dismissing him from his service.

William was in reflective mood. "Brings it back, doesn't it, all they lives lost, and for what? All they Cornish boys, Grenville, Slanning, Trevanion, all so that we could stick a bleddy flag up for a while. I bet they're wondering what they died for." He flung his musket to the ground in disgust.

## Chapter 95

Nat Tregonning tightened his saddle straps and climbed onto his horse. He was still annoyed that John had refused to pass over the book. "I'll see you when I get back," he shouted.

"From where?"

“Best you don’t know. I’ll be a few days, maybe a week. While I’m away you can try and crack the code. It’ll give us the names to make us rich.” With that, he was gone, leaving John to wonder about the mission and who it was for.

That same afternoon, the innkeeper brought John a folded note. At first, he thought it was for Nat but his name was written neatly across it. Considering his limited reading ability he was pleased that the message was brief. It asked him to be on the east bank of the river, in the lane that ran down to Malpas. He was to be there at three o’clock that afternoon. It was not signed and there was no clue to the sender. He smelt the paper, perfume: he hoped it was from a woman. He spent the remainder of the morning trying to decipher the names in the book then put it to one side: it was time for his meeting.

As he crouched behind the hedge he read the note again. He hoped it wasn’t a trap but why would it be, whoever he had to meet could just as easily take him at the inn. Before long, he heard the sound of hoof beats and then a large white horse rounded the corner. He recognized it immediately and as it drew closer, he could see the rider, it was Rebecca Treleigh, the wife of the late James Treleigh, the man he’d killed.

It was a warm day and with the sun behind her he could see the outline of her body through her thin top clothes. Her breasts rose and fell with the movement of the horse and he enjoyed the view. He guessed she was about forty, a good ten years younger than her late husband. She sat astride her horse which was unusual for ladies of quality who mostly rode side-saddle. For all that, Rebecca Treleigh was certainly a lady. He hated her for what she was but as his eyes followed her every movement, he couldn’t help but admire her figure.

The horse stopped and in a slightly raised voice its rider said, “There is no need to hide, I’ve no intention of placing you in danger.” He looked back along the lane to make sure she was alone, stood up and walked towards her, his hand on his sword, eyes searching for soldiers.

“I mean it,” she said, “I’ve come alone to meet you.” She dismounted and tied her horse to a tree, “Here, come and sit with me on the bank.”

Neither spoke until John asked, “Have we come to watch the river?”

She followed his eyes and said, “No, nor have I asked you here to stare at my breasts. I have come to talk to you. I need to know why you killed the priest.”

“The priest?” John hadn’t expected that. Her husband yes, but not the priest. “I didn’t kill him but it may concern you to know who did.”

“Was it my husband?”

John paused. “It was, and his accomplice.”

“Nat Tregonning I assume.”

“I...I cannot answer that, Nat is a friend of mine.”

“Of course it was Tregonning,” she snapped, “who else would it be? You mark my words, Nat Tregonning will offer you wine but it will be laced with vinegar. He is no friend of yours. Do you know he is Grenville’s spy?” John didn’t reply. “How do you think he got you out of Lydford so easily?”

John paused: how did she know so much about him? He was finding it difficult to keep his eyes from her breasts. She was aware of it and said, “If it will help you concentrate, I will put a cloak over my shoulders.”

He was embarrassed and changed the subject. "Did your husband blame me for killing the priest?"

"He did, but I guessed it was him and of course, your friend Nat Tregonning. That man will use you and then he will drop you like a pebble into this river, he will watch you drown with a smile on his face."

"He's already had that chance but didn't take it, why will he do it now?"

"Oh not now, when it suits him, when he has what he wants. He told me that you had killed the priest and just last week he said that it was you who'd stabbed my husband. So you see, he is building a case against you, to use when the time is right."

"Last week?" John looked confused.

"And where is he now, your precious Mr Tregonning, do you know that?"

"I...I don't, he didn't say."

"More like he wouldn't say. He's gone to St Ives to do a little spying for the general. There'll be some hanging down there soon, you mark my words."

John was thoughtful, how could he have been so stupid? But then again, why would she want to help him? He needed some answers. "If what you say is correct then why are you telling me, your husband's killer?"

"My husband meant nothing to me. If you hadn't cut his throat then some other person would have. You did me a favour: you removed an evil man from my life and left me with his fortune. It couldn't have worked out better if I'd planned it myself."

Yesterday, John had been reasonably content with his life but now Nat and Rebecca Treleigh had turned it upside down. "You say Nat will betray me, has he told anyone else?"

"I don't know, he may have."

"Mrs Treleigh, will you answer me honestly if I ask you something?"

"I will try but I make no promises."

"I have a liking for Parliament and you are a lady of some standing with a strong Royalist background. You and Nat are on the same side. What are we doing here?"

She hesitated, unsure how to convince him.

"You don't answer. Could it be that you don't trust me, either that or you've something to hide."

"I will tell you this. Nat Tregonning is on whichever side suits him. He owes allegiance to no one apart from himself and would kill us both if it suited him."

"I'm beginning to understand that but while you've told me much about Nat you've said nothing of yourself. You've still not answered my question and that concerns me."

She paused, aware that she could delay no longer. "You say that we are on different sides but are you sure? Your friend the priest, he disliked the King and the direction the church was taking and so do his

friends. Some of those friends are in high places with links to the men of Parliament. If I tell you he was also my friend, would you understand?"

John frowned. Could she be on Parliament's side, surely not? "But you're a Treleigh, you support the King, you raise money for his cause."

"I know how it seems, but politicians need people who know the area. Information is difficult in Cornwall with it being so strongly in the King's pocket. The priest was involved in this as were you, but what you clearly don't know is that I am as well. Who better to work for Parliament than the wife of a trusted Royalist? I am above suspicion. Within Cornwall, only the priest knew my secret, that's how we work. And now you know, and my life is in your hands." John didn't reply and she continued, "Tregonning's desperate to know the name of the man who controls the network in Cornwall: that is what he hopes to learn from you."

"I can't tell him, the priest didn't say."

"I know that: he would never have told you. The link was broken with his death but we repaired the chain when I took his place. Now you will take Thomas Prowse's place."

"Thomas Prowse, I guessed he was involved. Your husband must have known about him, he tried to have me kill him but I didn't."

"I know that. Thomas is off fighting with Fairfax, he left soon after you killed my husband. Now, I've told you this much because I want you to come and work for me, both on my estate and for the cause but before you reply you must agree to something. While Tregonning lives we are all in danger: your first job is to kill him."

"Kill him?" John thought of their friendship and the handshake. How could he kill him?

"Yes, kill him. Your life, in particular, hangs by a thread. Tregonning will probably return soon and for the good of Parliament and our necks you must strike as soon as he comes to Truro. Will you do it?"

John couldn't find the words but he knew that he'd no choice. He nodded.

"Good. When it's done, you must ride to my estate. That will be the next time we meet. Now, help me onto my horse."

John placed his hands either side of her waist and lifted her into the saddle. She smiled. It was clear that she enjoyed the attention.

As he made his way back to the tavern his mind was in turmoil. The man he thought was his friend was his enemy and this lady who he'd despised just an hour ago was to be his accomplice, had been all the time had he but known. His thoughts turned to lighter matters: she'd lovely breasts. Perhaps one day he would share her bed.

## Chapter 96

"Bristol lost. I can't believe it. Poor King Charles," Jabe looked at William, he'd long tired of his blind loyalty to the King. "Jabe, we're his only chance now, we can't let him down."

“Let him down,” said Jabe. “What the hell do you mean, let him down? We’ve been shot at, lost friends and relations and you talk of letting him down. If anyone’s been let down tis us.”

“How can you say that: he’s the King?”

“Look, I don’t know how many miles we’ve marched together but I’m pissed off listening to your bleddy love affair with the King. He was the one who got us into this mess by picking a fight with the Scots and then he fell out with his own Parliament. I tell you now, most of the ordinary soldiers here don’t give a shit which side runs the country. They don’t care what government they live under so long as they can plough and go to market. They’re sick of this bleddy King.”

“But he’s the King, you must see that.”

“What I see is a man. That’s all he is. He’s there because they made his father King when they couldn’t find anyone else. He’s a man: he goes for a piss the same as you and me. This nonsense about being appointed by God is a wagon load of shit.”

Jabe was breathing heavily. William had never seen him like this: the anger, the resentment. He didn’t react but Jabe was in no mood to let it rest. “I’ll grant you one thing, he’s no worse than any of the others who’ve sat in his chair. My God we’ve had a bunch of selfish bastards to lord it over us. All they’re ever interested in is their own ends.” William had heard enough, Jabe was in danger of getting himself strung up. He walked away.

Goring’s soldiers still caused havoc in Devon. They took what they wanted and those who refused were put to the sword. He claimed that the war made it necessary and even ignored the Prince’s protests. Towns barred their gates while others resorted to bribes to get him to head off somewhere else.

The Parliamentary advance was relentless. Cromwell mopped up the Royalist garrisons in Wiltshire and Hampshire while Sir Thomas Fairfax headed to the west.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> September the garrison and tenants on St Michael’s Mount were in shock. Sir Francis Basset had died. Arthur, his brother, succeeded him. How he wished he’d done so in happier times. It seemed there would never again be any good news for the people of Cornwall: they’d been stripped of their resources and their will.

Goring now began a new offensive but not against Fairfax. His fight was with the Clubmen who he accused of supporting the enemy. He marched out of Tiverton and attacked any community he suspected of aiding them. By early October he was back in Tiverton again, awaiting orders. Grenville was in Cornwall, still insisting that the quarrels were Goring’s fault. The Prince was exasperated with both of them.

## Chapter 97

John’s nerves were on edge as he waited for Nat Tregonning to show up – he was late. It was a couple of weeks since he’d left on his mission and the message left at the inn had said to meet him on the road to Malpas. Why here, he thought? Could it be just coincidence that it was where he’d met Rebecca Treleigh? He still had doubts about her. Perhaps he was being used to do her dirty work. Maybe she’d set him up? He would wait to hear what Nat had to say before he made his move.

The rhythmic sound of hoof beats cut across the evening air – it had to be Nat. A rider appeared out of the half-light and shouted, “Hi John, how’s it been?”

John replied in a steady voice. "Fine thanks, and you?"

"It was a good trip...and profitable. There are now a few less troublemakers to worry us." John didn't reply. Tregonning dismounted and tied his horse to a tree. As he walked, he put his hand to his side, as if checking that something was still there, a knife perhaps. "John, I've got some fresh orders."

"Orders? But I thought we worked for ourselves. You said that no man would be our master."

Tregonning chuckled, "I did, but we can still work to orders."

"And these orders, do they involve me?"

"Very much," he said. "I've asked you many times for the names in the Cornish network but each time you say you don't know."

"And that's the truth," said John.

"Maybe it is and maybe it isn't. See, the problem I've got is that they that pay me don't believe it. They say that if I use a bit more pressure then you'd tell us what we need to know. They also say that if you don't know then you're no good to us anyway."

John pondered on what Nat had said. "It sounds like I aren't needed if I don't know and if I tell you then I'm of no more use. Sounds like I'm done for either way. So tell me, how're you going to persuade me to part with this information that I don't have? And what will you tell Sir Richard when you return empty-handed?"

As the question died on his lips, John heard the sound of hooves. He shouted, "You bastard, you've set me up."

"I'm sorry John but you're worth a tidy sum to me. Believe me, I wish you'd given me what I wanted but there are others much more skilled than me at getting at the information."

John had but a moment to act: the riders would soon be there. In one quick movement he drew his sword and lunged. Nat Tregonning reached for his knife but it was too late, blood was already gushing from his throat. Aware that he'd breathed his last he sank to his knees and a kick sent him into the water. John didn't wait to see his body begin its journey on the outgoing tide. The riders were two corners away: he'd little time. In a flash, he was on Tregonning's horse and galloping up across the side of the valley hoping that the fading light would come to his rescue. He would ride hard to the east for a mile then circle to the north and head for the coast. After a while he stopped to listen. There were no pursuers.

As the horse trotted into Churchtown a thought crossed his mind. The two men who'd killed the priest were dead, both by his hand.

Rebecca Treleigh looked anxious as he approached, "Are you sure you weren't followed?"

"Positive, we were by the river when I killed him. I pushed him in and he drifted away."

"Good, we'll all sleep better for it. While he was alive the whole network was threatened."

"The whole network: how big is it?" asked John.

She didn't answer: the look was enough. "You must be hungry: you've earned your supper."

As John walked towards the kitchen he looked back and asked, "Now that we're working together can I call you Rebecca?"

"No you can't," she replied, "I'm Mrs Treleigh to you."

Well that was clear enough, he thought. I don't think I'll suggest sharing her bed just yet.

## Chapter 98

St Ives had long been known to harbour Parliamentary sympathisers. It was one of a number such areas in an otherwise Royalist west Cornwall and when Grenville received a report of a rising, he'd moved quickly to stamp it out. It had spread to the hamlets of Zennor and Towedack by the time he'd arrived but he soon suppressed it. When it was over he'd taken three of the captured rebels and publicly hanged one at each of what he referred to as the most-rotten towns in the west: Truro, Helston and St Ives. The leader of the rebels, Captain Arundell, had managed to escape to Bridgwater but the Mayor of St Ives, Edward Hammond, had been placed in the dreaded Launceston Jail. Rebecca Treleigh knew that it was the result of Nat Tregonning's trip.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> October, Fairfax was in Tiverton where he heard of the rising at St Ives. He took it as a sign that the Cornish would welcome relief.

Goring was running out of options. He'd made his way to Exeter and then on to Totnes, a Royalist town but with many Parliamentary sympathisers. Sir John Berkeley had left the Plymouth siege for Exeter and Sir John Digby had taken his place.

"Calmed down Boy?" said William. Jabe didn't reply. "Come on, we all gotta let off steam now and then. See, I didn't know you felt that strong."

"Well you do now! We've been through hell for this King and I'm fed up being told what I should think about him. Anyway, I aren't cut out for this soldiering."

"Well, you haven't done so badly up till now. I thought it was just that you'd joined the wrong side." Both men laughed and shook hands but the outburst had worried William.

## Chapter 99

Ever since he'd seen Jenefer in Truro, John had wanted to know about the baby she was carrying. He knew he'd have to be careful: her father had an evil temper and hated him. He told Rebecca Treleigh that he'd some private business to attend to and set off for the cottage. He'd gone on foot but was soon there. He stood at the end of the lane, watching, not knowing whether to wait or move closer. It was the patch of white that caught his eye, the washing being spread out to dry on the furze. He crept along the hedge until he was level with her: the baby was in a basket on the ground.

"What's that then, more washing?"



The girl was startled and then flustered. "John...you gave me a start. I didn't know if you were alive or dead. What are you doing here?"

"Well that's a fine welcome I must say."

"You can't stay, he'll see you and there'll be trouble."

"Who'll see me, your father? I aren't afraid of him. I'm a soldier now and have fought tougher men than him."

"He'll thrash me, he's told me I'm never to see you again. Please go now before he comes."

"I'll go if you promise to meet me."

"I can't, I can't."

"Then I won't go."

Jenefer struggled for an answer: she could only see problems. "Alright then, down by the river, in our usual place, in an hour."

The hour passed slowly and even then she was late. "I thought you weren't coming," he said, "that maybe he'd stopped you."

"He would've if he'd known where I was going. I can hardly leave his sight."

"Since the baby?"

"Yes, since the baby, he's been worse since then."

"Jen, I need to know. The baby, is it mine?" Jenefer looked at the ground. "Only I've been working it out and I don't see how it can be. It doesn't seem to be the right age for when we were last together."

"It's not yours. I swear to you I meant to wait but..."

"But you soon forgot, not long after I'd gone by the look of it."

She burst into tears, "I'm sorry: it's not what you think."

John remained calm. "Do you want to tell me about it or shall I leave?"

For a moment she was too choked to reply. She shook her head. "No, stay." As she spoke, she looked back across the field, towards the cottage.

## Chapter 100

By mid-October Fairfax occupied most of Devon but he still had two major objectives: to relieve Plymouth and capture Exeter. His scouts assured him that Plymouth was in no immediate danger and he turned his attention to the Royalist stronghold at Exeter. Not only would it be an important prize, but its recapture would also protect his back as he moved further west. He proposed an immediate attack but on being told

that many of his troops were sick, he decided to delay. A blockade was mounted and the bulk of his army moved to Ottery St Mary. The attack would wait until his men had recovered.

Grenville was at Okehampton, rounding up deserters and finding new recruits for the defence of Exeter. He established a garrison and fortified the town. He was as cruel as ever and tormented civilians, enemies and even reluctant allies. Despite this, his soldiers respected him, in part because he used the plunder to pay them. Despite the imminent danger posed by Fairfax, the Royalist commanders still refused to co-operate. Goring blamed Grenville for the desertions among the Cornish and Grenville complained about the way Goring had been appointed supreme commander. Discipline was poor among the ordinary soldiers with the Cornish fighting Goring's troops and threatening to go home if fresh clothes and back pay was not forthcoming.

Despite the animosity, Goring put forward a proposal that even satisfied Grenville. He offered him a part of his army to enable him to confront Sir Thomas Fairfax. They joined Grenville at Okehampton and Goring moved the remainder to Exeter.

## Chapter 101

The Prince was still trying to persuade his generals to work together. He reminded them that the defence of the entire West Country was in their hands. Goring had given him a promise to perform any task if only Grenville would co-operate and the Prince responded that the Cornishman had finally agreed to accept his orders.

"Pretty gullible lot, this monarchy of yours," said Jabe. William made a face at him but knew he was right. Nothing changed and it seemed like it never would.

Less than three weeks later, on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1645, Prince Charles received a letter from Goring. This time there were no complaints, no moans about Grenville, General George Goring had resigned his commission and sailed for France. The Prince and his Council were staggered. Goring pleaded ill health and while his more charitable colleagues accepted it, many suspected that he'd run from the fight. Some wished that they'd gone with him. Lord Wentworth took command of his troops: it would be his job to try and bring them under control.

"Well good riddance is what I say," said William, "I never liked old Shagnasty in the first place."

Jabe was less convinced. "Much as I hate the bugger, I don't believe he's a coward. I reckon he got fed up with all that arguing. Anyway, they're bound to put Grenville in charge now: he'll stand a better chance against Fairfax."

At the end of October the armies of Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell combined at Ottery St Mary and the people of Exeter waited for the inevitable attack. The King was aware of the worsening situation and was anxious for his son's safety. He sent instructions that if Fairfax advanced any further west, Prince Charles was to leave for France immediately. Edward Hyde and Lord Hopton read the order: they would implement the plan but only as a last resort.

The Prince knew that Grenville hated Goring as much as the enemy and he now hoped that his general would concentrate his efforts on fighting the approaching army. For a while there was an improvement but it didn't last long: on the 21<sup>st</sup> November, Grenville withdrew his Cornish regiments from Okehampton and pulled them back across the Tamar – to Launceston. He fortified the castle and posted troops along the Cornish side of the Tamar to guard the bridges and other river crossings. The action received Jabe's

approval. He also liked the proclamation that if any English Royalists attempted to enter Cornwall, then the bells should be rung and the people should rise to drive them out.

The Prince was livid. He ordered Grenville to explain his actions. They met at Truro on the 27<sup>th</sup> November but far from being penitent, Grenville flatly refused to let Goring's thieving troops enter Cornwall. Maybe the Prince sympathised but he couldn't accept Grenville's actions and when he suggested that the Prince should negotiate a separate peace settlement for Cornwall, he was speechless. Grenville proposed that a line be drawn from Newton Bushell and Okehampton to Chulmleigh and the Royalist forces be concentrated behind it, shutting Cornwall off from the war. "Your Majesty," he said, "is aware that he has no entire county in obedience but poor little Cornwall."

The Prince's Council condemned the idea and accused Grenville of trying to use the situation as a stepping-stone to independence, of attempting to establish Cornwall as an autonomous state. They accused him of treason, of being more interested in saving Cornwall than in pursuing the Royalist cause. Such an action would send a clear message that the Prince had abandoned his father.

Grenville had failed to persuade the Prince but wouldn't give up. He now planned to appeal direct to the Cornish people. His first move would be to call a meeting of all those who were likely to support the idea.

Despite Royalist propaganda, not everyone in Cornwall was a King's man, especially those in the east. There were also many who didn't care who won. The risings in Devon and Somerset encouraged them to form their own brand of Clubmen to protect their homes and hundreds from around Stratton prepared to confront the military.

William was stunned when the order was given. "I'm all for fighting Fairfax," he said, "even Goring's Crew, but I aren't going to lift a finger against our own."

"Little England, now it makes sense."

William looked puzzled. "What the hell are you rambling about?"

Jabe responded. "One of the men reckons that this area's called Little England on account of it being so close to the border. People 'round here are more English than Cornish. Anyway, I don't care who they are, if they're going to have a go at me then I'm going to have a go at them."

William shook his head: he remained unconvinced, especially as those giving the order were English.

Grenville was busy planning his meeting but before he could get very far, events overtook him – in late December 1645 he was ordered to join a new offensive in Devon.

"I wish they'd make up their bleddy minds," complained Jabe. "We've been to and fro across this river so many times I'm beginning to feel seasick."

William laughed but he knew that the threat from Fairfax was getting ever closer and that this time it would be a short march. They joined the Prince at Tavistock on the 27<sup>th</sup> December: a combined army of about 4,000. Not a huge force compared to the enemy but perhaps enough to keep Fairfax out of Cornwall.

"Good move that," announced William, "Prince Charles being referred to as the Duke of Cornwall. I know why they're doing it but tis good to hear."

## Chapter 102

John had much to think about after his talk with Jenefer. He'd left with a mixture of anger and despair and when he went to see Rebecca Treleigh for news of Fairfax's progress, it was clear his mind was elsewhere.

"You seem pre-occupied: I've sensed it for a while. The way you look at me makes me think that you are trying to build up courage to ask if you can share my bed." John was taken aback: this was the nearest thing to an invitation he'd received. "I have to say that it would give me great pleasure but you've made your thoughts clear on that."

"Well it's not that I find you unattractive. In fact I'm flattered to be admired by one so young but any arrangement would be more out of need than desire."

John forced a smile. She was teasing him, wasn't she? "It's, it's about Jenefer," he said, "a girl I once loved."

"But no longer?"

"She's had a child by another man while I've been away. I need your advice."

"Ah, rejected love."

"It's not that simple. I suspected her of looking elsewhere but she tried to be true and has been badly treated."

"You're sure, are you? She's not just saying that to win you back?"

"I'm sure it's true: I know the man."

"Some other local buck no doubt, eager to take your place."

"No, it's more complicated than that. It...it was her father."

Even the worldly Rebecca was taken aback, "Her father, how could he do that?"

"It seems it began when her mother died. She thought it was for comfort but as he began to fondle her, she knew what he wanted. She tried to fight him off but he was too strong and he raped her. Ever since then she's had to do what he wanted and thrashes her whenever she complains. He'd been careful not to give her a baby but this time she fell pregnant and it survived despite all their efforts to get rid of it. I can't get over the difference in her. She's cowed and there's no spark left. I offered to take my sword to him but she refused. I don't know what to do."

"And Jenefer, how does she feel about him? Despite this, does she still love him as a father?"

"She hates him and would happily have me deal with him but for the consequences."

"But do you love her?"

"I don't know. I feel sorry for her but I can't think straight."

Rebecca Treleigh thought for a moment. "Don't confront him. In the mood you're in, one of you will end up dead. If you kill him then the authorities will blame you and that could affect the network. Tell me his name."

"Josiah Jennings, they live at..."

"Josiah Jennings! I know the cottage...and the man. I'm his landlord. I know him as a rogue but this... Let me think about it and when I'm ready I'll let you know what's to be done."

## Chapter 103

### Cromwell in Devon

Edward Hyde had received two letters from the King: one dated the 7<sup>th</sup> November and the other the 7<sup>th</sup> December. Both ordered that the Prince be sent to Denmark immediately, if not to there then to France or Holland.

Both Hyde and Lord Hopton were against it but it was a direct order and they reported the contents to the Prince's Council. After some discussion a response was agreed. In it they asked that the Prince should remain as head of the Western Association but if it became necessary then he should go to either Scilly or Jersey. They knew that the response would be slow: they'd bought some time.

"Tis hopeless. We're low on bleddy powder and our clothes are in tatters." No one argued, Jabe had said what the others were thinking. Colonel Richard Arundell's men were so miserably equipped that many had deserted but despite all these problems the western Royalist commanders still quarrelled and Lord Wentworth would only take orders direct from the Prince.

Oliver Cromwell had discovered that Wentworth was quartered at Bovey Tracey and on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> January he stormed the building. The officers were playing cards and the men were unprepared for action. Four hundred were captured and the remainder fled to Tavistock. Lord Wentworth and his senior officers escaped but he was badly shaken and despite still having a considerable force, he refused to join the Prince in the proposed advance. This was their last chance to confront Fairfax in Devon but without cavalry they dare not attack. Wentworth was not to be persuaded and the Cornish infantry had no option but to move out of Tavistock and head back to Cornwall. Once there, they set up their defences to face Fairfax's Army – and Wentworth's troops. As they crossed the Tamar, Jabe looked down at the tumbling waters, he hoped it would be for the last time.

Wentworth knew that they wouldn't be allowed to enter Cornwall and he remained in Devon where his men began plundering again. This time however, the whole area rose against them, encouraged by the knowledge that Fairfax was heading their way.

"So where now?" asked Jabe. "I know we couldn't beat Fairfax but for it to end this way is terrible. Wentworth should be strung up."

"I know," said William, "it's all up with Devon. Exeter won't hold out for much longer and then it'll be our turn."

Wentworth's troops were hungry and desperate and despite the resistance, they crossed the border and entered Cornwall. They received no welcome and before long they quarrelled with Grenville's men. William had enough problems without fighting his own side but that didn't stop him referring to them as

“Goring’s Crew” and telling them that it was a pity they weren’t as brave against the enemy. Occasionally he found it necessary to break a few heads to make his point.

## Chapter 104

Rebecca Treleigh watched as John groomed his horse. The sweep of his arm excited her and she imagined his coarse hands on her body. Despite her protests she was a little more attracted to him than she admitted. Now, with the talk of Jenefer, she wondered if she’d missed her chance. John too, was deep in thought and when she spoke, he turned and wondered how long she’d been watching him. “Can you stop for a moment: I want to talk to you.” He turned to face her. “I want you to go away, just for a few days.”

“Why?” he asked.

“No questions, it’s better you don’t know. Just go to Truro and make your presence known to someone of importance. We may need to be able to prove you were not here.”

“Is it to do with...”

“No questions. Here, take this money and go. I will send a message to the inn when it’s safe to return.”

He knew the reason and wondered what she planned for Josiah Jennings. He also wondered about Jenefer. She hated her father but how would she react if he were killed? As he rode into Truro it was quiet and he went straight to the inn where he’d stayed before. He would ensure that as many people as possible noticed him.

Rebecca Treleigh met Jenefer and her baby down by the river: they remained there while two men called to discuss some business with her father. After an hour, Jenefer returned to the empty cottage to collect her possessions. In future she would live and work in the Treleigh household. Her father had been dealt with – he would no longer be a problem.

## Chapter 105

Rebecca Treleigh met John as he rode back into the yard. He’d received the message and immediately set out on his return. “It’s done,” she said, “and no suspicion will rest on you.”

“Thank you. How’s Jenefer?”

“I watched her today as she bathed. She is covered in bruises. She will heal soon enough, in body but her mind may take longer. In spite of the child, do you still love her?”

“I think so but I aren’t sure how she feels.”

“She thinks the child will be a barrier between you and curses her father for destroying her life.”

“It’s strange,” said John, “I don’t know why but the child has increased my feelings for her. Maybe it’s pity I feel and I’m confusing it with love.”

“In my experience if you’ve any love at all in a marriage then you are fortunate. My own was loveless: I found my pleasures elsewhere. My advice to you is to grasp it while you can, go to her and tell her your feelings.”

John found Jenefer in her bedroom, feeding the baby. She made no attempt to cover her breasts. “He looks content enough but what baby wouldn’t be, suckling on those.” Jenefer smiled, she recalled the last time they’d lain together and John had kissed them each in turn. “He’s a lovely baby. Apart from his father you must be pleased.”

“I am and I’ll do my best for him but I know he’ll change my life, maybe cost me a marriage.” Her head dropped and the tears flowed.

Neither spoke for a while but then John broke the silence. “You know my feelings for you ...”

She tried to interrupt.

“Hear me out,” he said, “I’ve more to say. In spite of the child my feelings haven’t changed. It’s you I think about when I’m at work and when I’m in bed. It’s you I want to make love to. We both have jobs now: we’d have each other and a baby that we could share. Will you have me?”

Jenefer didn’t answer, she couldn’t, her emotions had taken hold of her and they clung to each other.

## Chapter 106

As the New Model Army moved down through Devon, Sir John Digby had no option but to raise the siege at Plymouth. His troops retreated into Cornwall and combined with the other Royalist regiments.

“Here we go again,” said William. Digby once commanded Grenville and now refuses to take orders from him.

“Funny thing,” replied Jabe. “I remember the Prince having a go at Grenville for not taking orders from Goring but he’s said nothing to Digby. Like I said, it depends who you are.” Apart from the disagreements between the commanders, their men also quarrelled and Wentworth’s troopers fell out with everyone. One exchange turned into a brawl and three men lay dead on the ground. Drastic action was needed and the Prince and his Council decided that they had to find a new leader who could command the respect of the whole army.

“You wait and see,” said Jabe, “We’re going to see old Hoppy back in charge. He’s the only one who can do it.” Lord Hopton was the obvious choice and after discussing it with his Council the Prince approached him. Fortunately, Grenville knew that he didn’t have the support of the other commanders and hadn’t put himself forward. Moreover, he’d already confirmed that he would be happy with either Hopton or the Earl of Forth. With Grenville on side, the Prince was confident it would work and he invited Lord Hopton to become the Supreme Commander of the Royalist Army in the West. Wentworth was to be his general of horse and Grenville his lieutenant general of foot.

Hopton’s first reaction was to turn it down but he knew the situation called for personal sacrifices and he agreed. Apart from the problems within the Royalist Army, there was the small matter of General Fairfax knocking on the door. When Hopton assembled his force, he was surprised to find that the Cornish trained bands had shrunk to just 150 men, there was no artillery to speak of and his total force was just over 4,000.

“So we’ve come full circle,” said Jabe. “Make any difference will it?”

“Not to Fairfax,” replied William, “except now he’s dealing with an honourable man. I can’t see what good it’ll do us though. Tis too late: we’re a spent force. Now, if he’d chosen Grenville...” William may have been right. The Cornish people were far more likely to follow a Grenville. As good as Hopton was, there was little chance that an Englishman could lift their national spirit.

Sir Richard Grenville and the other officers pledged their support to Hopton and it seemed to the Prince that he’d found the solution. It lasted two days. Grenville refused to accept Hopton’s orders and demanded that he be made responsible for the security of Cornwall. The Prince was exasperated and declared Grenville unmanageable. He’d already proposed a separate peace treaty for Cornwall, made plans to put it in place despite their orders and now he was reneging on an agreement made just two days before. Prince Charles made one last attempt to persuade him but he refused. His behaviour could be tolerated no longer and on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1646 Sir Richard Grenville was placed under arrest.

The Prince had little choice but his action was a touch fuse on a powder keg and Grenville’s officers leapt to his defence. One of them, Colonel Roscarrock, urged Grenville to resist and threatened to raise the Cornish in his defence. Grenville thanked Roscarrock for his support and persuaded him not to intervene. He accepted his arrest with good grace.

At first the Cornish soldiers were stunned but as the news spread that he was in Launceston Jail there were threats of rebellion and plans to storm the prison. It seemed that even those who’d complained about his behaviour were prepared to fight for his release. After all, he was Cornish and the brother of their most heroic leader. William was livid, more so than Jabe had ever seen him. He told everyone that the Prince was pandering to foreigners. “The bleddy boy just doesn’t understand what he’s done,” he said. “He’s stirred up the whole of Cornwall. He’ll have to let him out, either that or he’s on his own.”

Jabe saw himself as campaign manager and threatened anyone who refused to join the protest. Despite that, he knew that Grenville had brought it on himself and he told William, “I’ve never known a more awkward bugger in my life – apart from that bastard Goring.”

Grenville continued to reject all offers of help. He’d played the Cornish card once too often and to the wrong people. The Prince was aware that his presence posed a threat and two days later he transferred him to St Michael’s Mount. Locked away down there he wouldn’t be a constant catalyst for rebellion. Major General Robert Harris was given the unenviable job of commanding his force, a hopeless task considering the men’s allegiance to Grenville.

Lord Hopton was now the unquestioned leader of the Royalist Western Army. His exploits in Cornwall during the early part of the war made him popular and although, as William said, he wasn’t a Grenville or even a Cornishman, he was respected.

“I don’t give much for Grenville’s chances,” said Jabe. “If we don’t hang him then the other side will. They won’t give Skellum Grenville the courtesy of a trial.”

That had already occurred to William, the fall of Cornwall would undoubtedly bring about his execution. As a turncoat, he would be shown no mercy and his enemies would watch his dance of death with pleasure. “It can’t happen,” he said, “not after all he’s done. We’ll get him out and he can go abroad.”

“Right...how’re we going to do that then?”

William had to admit that he’d yet to work out the details.



## Chapter 107

### The Battle Of Torrington

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January, in heavy snow and frost, Sir Thomas Fairfax stormed Dartmouth. The town was staunchly Parliamentary and there were many inside the walls ready to take revenge on the Royalists. The land attack was backed up by Parliamentary ships in the harbour and before long, Governor Sir Hugh Pollard surrendered. In this cruel war it wasn't unusual for reprisals, even executions, and the forty-eight Royalist officers and 1,000 soldiers gathered to hear their fate. Today though, there would be no such action and the Cornish Royalists were sent home with two shillings each and a message from Fairfax that he came to save their county not to ruin it. In complete contrast to the treatment handed out by Essex's Army two years' earlier, his show of mercy was winning over the people.

Lord Hopton was at Launceston, planning one more campaign. He proposed to join up with Royalists from north Devon, march to Chudleigh and on to Exeter – to relieve the siege. Jabe shook his head. "I thought we'd finished traipsing around that bleddy county." William was far from happy but he couldn't help smiling at his little friend.

Fairfax was at Powderham Castle and his infantry, under Sir Hardrass Waller and Richard Ingoldsby, was at Crediton and Chudleigh. Other units were near Exeter, at Dartmouth and at Totnes where the people had flocked to his support. On the 27<sup>th</sup> January he moved to Exeter and summoned the Governor to surrender. It was no surprise when he refused.

Fairfax had heard that Hopton was in Devon and he left Exeter to deal with him. He didn't see him as a major threat, more an annoying moth attracted by a candle. He left Sir Hardness Waller to hold the siege at Exeter while he marched north. He'd planned to wait for Major General Skippon but even without him he had about 10,000 men, a large enough force. By the 8<sup>th</sup> February Fairfax was in Crediton where he heard that Lord Hopton was heading that way. He broke camp and headed for Chulmleigh, ten or more miles from Torrington.

The Prince's failure to release Grenville had caused some desertions and William had considered joining them but his regard for Hopton had persuaded him to stay. "Bigger fool you," said Jabe but as they marched away, he was with him. The Royalist horse and infantry made good progress across Devon and as they entered Torrington, they paused to enable their artillery to catch up.

"Well that's what I heard," said Jabe, "and I'm usually right." He'd picked up a rumour that a force of 4,000 foot and 1,000 horse had arrived from France and was on its way to join them.

"Bollocks," said William, "If you're right then it'll be a first."

He was not, and he spent the next few hours moaning. "I don't know where the hell these stories come from. I tell you what, I've got a bad feeling about this one. I think we got it wrong. Fairfax has got one hell of an army. Do you think I've left it too late to ask for sick leave?"

William was worried too but he forced a laugh, "Looking at Hopton's face I don't think it's a good time to ask."

Hopton met with his officers to discuss where best to confront the enemy and to the despair of the people of Torrington, the decision was to make a stand there. Hopton considered it defensible. He placed his

horse to the north of the town, his musketeers in the hedges and set up barricades on all the approach roads.

Early on the 16<sup>th</sup> February Fairfax marched for Torrington. William and Jabe crouched behind their cover on the outskirts of the town, muskets trained on an unseen enemy. Before long, the huge army came into sight. "Bleddy hell," said Jabe, "we're going to need some luck this time."

There were a few skirmishes at first but when the attack came, it was ferocious. It was to the east of the town and by late afternoon, the Royalists were being driven back from hedge to hedge. Fairfax's musketeers poured volley after volley into them and it seemed that Jabe's pessimism was well founded. The enemy was superior in every respect and Royalist casualties began to mount. By 8.00pm the defenders had almost been driven back to the town. They waited for the next attack: it would be decisive. Fairfax wanted to push on and finish it that night but fading light made it difficult and he reluctantly ordered a cease-fire. It would resume in the morning.

William was quiet: the situation was bad. "We're going to have to surrender," he said. "Otherwise they'll wipe us out inside an hour."

"Hopton isn't much for surrender, you know that from the past. Anyway, someone over there reckons he's going to order a night attack. Bleddy mad if you ask me." It was to be neither. As midnight approached the Royalists began to move out.

Fairfax was told that something was happening. He despatched a party of dragoons to investigate and within minutes they were involved in an exchange of fire. Parliamentary troops poured forward to support them and were soon swarming all over the barricades, driving the Royalists back across the town. William fired a shot into the darkness and then used his musket as a club whenever anyone came near. The Parliamentary horse joined in the attack and as Hopton led a party of dragoons to resist them, he was wounded and his mount shot from under him. Wentworth's cavalry now joined the action but there was little they could do against such overwhelming odds. The Royalists were being chased through the streets and opeways: it was terrifying, even more so because it was dark. Many had already escaped the town and were scampering away to the west. Fire now engulfed the buildings and the townspeople ran into the streets only to be caught up in the maelstrom of musket shot and smoke. Many fell, their screams pitiful. The Royalist soldiers had no answer to the onslaught: they were pushed back and squeezed into an ever-reducing area. Many were killed or captured and a few took shelter in the houses but with fires raging it was little safer than the streets. Suddenly, like the sound of a dozen thunderclaps, a huge explosion rocked the town. For a moment there was confusion as attackers and defenders dived for cover. Few had any idea what had happened but then a shout went up, "It's the church." The religious building had been put to a more secular use, as a store for gunpowder and as a temporary hold for captured Royalists. Two hundred prisoners, guards and townspeople were killed in the blast. Lead and burning timber rained down on the surrounding streets and houses: it was mayhem.

William had been separated from Jabe, the last time he'd seen him was near the church and now he feared the worst. For a moment he considered going back but smoke and dust filled the air, choking him: he covered his mouth and nose and ran blindly from the action. Apart from his clothing, he was unscathed and he joined the others in the dash from the town. Once clear, they looked back at the flames reaching towards the sky. The long line of Royalist soldiers made a pathetic sight as they made their way along the lanes towards Cornwall.

In the morning, Fairfax inspected the devastation. This was not what he'd intended. Bodies and weapons littered the streets, debris was piled high and charred timbers still smouldered. The little country town was in ruins. About 15,000 soldiers had been involved in the action and a huge number had been killed – mostly Royalists. It had been a resounding victory for Parliament and the prisoners either switched sides or

accepted the two shillings and went home. Fairfax was so affected by the scenes that he gave strict orders that there was to be no repeat as they entered Cornwall. Any unnecessary violence or plunder would be punished by death. With that, he left the people of Torrington to mourn their dead and begin clearing the mess.

Hopton had escaped and now he and the other Royalists headed for Launceston. As they scampered away, William asked if anyone had seen Jabe. "Yeah, I saw him somewhere, running with his breeches on fire." In other circumstances it would have been funny.

Once across the Tamar, Hopton received an order to make a stand at Stratton. He was to hold out until the French troops arrived. "French troops," said William. "Well I'm buggered, Jabe was right."

Edward Hyde still refused to send the Prince away to safety. He knew well enough that he would be blamed if he endangered his life but in spite of that he couldn't bring himself to give the order. He busied himself organising horses and muskets for Stratton.

William woke from a fitful sleep, not something that usually put him in the best of moods but on this occasion, he was delighted. "You could've bleddy well waited," said Jabe, and then, "What the hell are you laughing at?"

"I'm sorry Jabe. I'm some pleased to see you, really I am, but your breeches, they're burnt black."

## Chapter 108

### Fairfax Enters Cornwall

Fear gripped most of the population as Fairfax entered Cornwall. The memory of the last invasion was still fresh in people's minds: Essex's troops had been cruel and vindictive and the same was expected this time. The New Model Army now guarded the Cornish border, not as a deterrent to an outside force but to prevent a Royalist breakout to join the King.

One of the men looked across at William. He shrugged, "tis all up with us, we've nothing left but to run and hide." Even being rebuked by an officer didn't shut him up. "Mark my words," he said, "we'll be home within a month, either that or in the ground."

Fear was what now drove the Cornish Army, the thought of Parliamentary atrocities were rife. Like the Irish, they'd be cut down with no regard for the code of war, their last moments filled with curses from soldiers seeking revenge for their treatment at Lostwithiel.

"Some bleddy choice," said William. "Either we get killed here or he hangs us later."

The little man nodded. "What's the point of fighting on? I know you won't agree but I'm thinking of changing sides. I'm no good to anyone dead. I mean, plenty of others have done it, including officers. Anyway, I never was keen on your King."

"I know that, you've told me times enough. But tis different for me. See, I'm a King's man and I can't desert him like that."

“Bugger me, you’re still dolling out the same shit as when we first met. I’ve told you before, he’s a selfish bastard who don’t give a damn for you or me. All he’s concerned about is being King. Look, you got a family and what about that girlfriend of yours, isn’t she worth more than the high and mighty King Charles?”

Even for William, self-preservation was a powerful motive. He’d seen so much fighting, so much bloodshed and for what? The cause was lost and he knew it. “You know what, I often wonder where John is now. He may even be with Fairfax for all I know. Perhaps he could help us, plead for us.”

When Essex had invaded two years earlier, the King and Maurice had been there to chase him out but now there was just the remnants of the Western Army. Anyway, what was the point of heading for Stratton – what good would that do? Hopton gave the order to break camp and they marched away – towards Bodmin. It was there that they would set up a defensive line across Cornwall. It was there that they would make a stand.

As part of the line, Thomas Basset, Charles Trevanion and Colonel Edgecumbe were sent to Lostwithiel, they had 500 horse and two regiments. A further 400 horse were posted on Cardinham Downs to watch for any approach from Liskeard.

About an hour after Basset left, Sir Thomas Fairfax entered Launceston. He faced light resistance from the few Royalists who’d remained and within a couple of hours he’d taken it. The townsfolk waited: dreading the punishment for not surrendering immediately. Children were quickly ushered indoors despite the fear that the houses would be torched.

Fairfax could almost smell the fear, and thoughts of the devastation at Torrington filled his mind. He called the town leaders together and told them that he wouldn’t attack unless provoked. He released the prisoners from Launceston Castle and gave each a shilling and a free pass.

The Puritan chaplain, Hugh Peters, addressed the people. He told them that Fairfax meant them no harm. Provided there was no resistance they would be left in peace. He was a Cornishman and had considerable influence amongst his own people. Besides, the townsfolk had had enough of war and Fairfax knew that he would achieve more by compassion than by force. They were won over and before long they were providing the Parliamentary forces with food.

Liskeard was a town loyal to the King. He’d stayed there during the battle at Lostwithiel and the people had been proud to show their support. As Sir Thomas Fairfax reached the outskirts, he reminded his men that any unwarranted force would receive harsh punishment. There was no trouble but their march through the town was hard for the people and when they stabled their horses in St Martin’s Parish Church it seemed like the ultimate insult. When they left, the building had to be thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed before it could be used again for religious worship.

Fairfax was wary of an attack from the Royalists in south-east Cornwall: it could cost him casualties and time. He sent Hugh Peters and the Governor of Plymouth to meet the people there, to persuade them that any pleasure derived from such an attack would be short-lived: it would be followed by despair for both them and Cornwall. Peters returned with an assurance that there would be no attack.

The Parliamentary Army quartered at Blisland, not far from Bodmin where Hopton planned to turn and fight. “What’s all this talk about a defensive line?” William wanted to know. The officer shrugged his shoulders, he knew little more than the ordinary soldier.

Jabe had been trying to grab a few minutes sleep. He opened one eye and said, “He’s just as scared as us. He don’t want to die for the King no more than we do.” The little man was right: no one wanted to lose their life making some futile gesture for a lost cause. They needn’t have worried, there was no more talk of

a last stand and when the order came, it was to move on. William nudged his friend with his boot and shouted, "Jabe, come on, raise your ass, we're leaving."

Jabe stirred, "Where to?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

"No idea but it's to the west: where else?"

It was 10.00pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> March when Hopton left Bodmin: he took his army the short distance to the moor at Castle an Dinas where he set up camp. Fairfax's scouts had watched them leave and the following day his army entered Bodmin. The news of his leniency at Launceston had reached there and he was welcomed by the townspeople. Once settled, Cromwell took a party of horse to guard the bridge over the Camel River at Wadebridge. Another party was sent to cover the road east of Lostwithiel to prevent a breakout to Plymouth.

The Royalists remained at Castle an Dinas for two nights. "Long enough," suggested Jabe. "I keep getting this feeling that Hoppy's going to turn around and have another go at him."

All chance of a Royalist recovery was gone and Prince Charles moved further to the west. He'd remained in Cornwall while there was any hope of victory but now the situation was hopeless: there was no longer any point. At 10.00pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1646 he set sail for Scilly in the ship Phoenix: Edward Hyde and Sir Arthur Basset were with him.

Hopton despatched his infantry for Probus but the cavalry remained at Castle an Dinas. From there they could make a dash for safety.

"Very soon there's going to be nowhere left to march," quipped Jabe. "We ought to give in now unless their planning to get us all killed."

"Dunno," said William, "but you know what he's like, he won't surrender unless he has to."

"I thought he was a mate of yours, changed your mind have you?"

"No I haven't," said William. "He's a bleddy good commander but he just doesn't know when tis time to call it a day."

Hopton and the remaining officers at Castle an Dinas knew that the situation was hopeless. They were demoralised – all talk of resistance long gone. Most wanted to ask for terms but Hopton refused to do so until it had been approved by the Prince. He sent a messenger to Pendennis, unaware that the Prince had already left for Scilly.

## **Chapter 109**

### **The Cornish Surrender**

Hopton sighed, the messenger had returned and he now knew the decision was his to make. A vote showed that only Major General Webb wanted to continue. Despite that, Hopton still delayed.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> March, Fairfax received a bundle of letters taken from a Royalist ship at Padstow. They were from the Earl of Glamorgan and divulged that six thousand Irish troops were ready to leave for England to

fight for the King. Another four thousand would be available on the 1<sup>st</sup> May. Such a force could swing the war and Fairfax knew he had to move quickly. Cornwall had to be taken before they arrived.

Hugh Peters saw a positive side to the news. He knew that the Cornish would see the King's use of Irish soldiers as an invasion: it would swing public opinion in their favour. Before long, there were protests against the foreign Popish army.

Defeat stared Hopton in the face but still he delayed. He wasn't prepared to fight but neither would he surrender. He moved some of his army to Truro and sent other regiments to St Columb, Grampound and Tregony.

William and Jabe were in a party near Truro, there was little to do other than sit around and talk. "Makes you think don't it," William frowned as if to say what's coming now? "It's us against the rest again, as though we're out of step with they lot from up country." William was about to reply when Jabe continued. "Only difference is that this time we're on our own and I don't reckon the King and his lackeys give a damn about us."

"Now, you aren't going to start on about the King again are you?"

"No, I've had my say there. The poor sod has lost the fight and I can't say I'm sorry. I was just thinking that they must think we're a right load of rebels."

William chuckled. "Praps we are, praps we are."

"Anyway, I can't understand what Hopton's up to: it's as though he still believes we can win." The officers could hear every word but they said nothing.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> March, Sir Thomas Fairfax wrote to Hopton, he urged him to spare more bloodshed and offered reasonable terms. The officers could go abroad or stay and negotiate for their estates providing they stopped fighting. Twenty shillings would be given to every trooper who gave up his horse and arms.

While he waited for a reply he continued his push: he moved to St Columb and attacked the Royalist quarters. Major General Pert was injured but he'd told Fairfax that if the Royalist soldiers knew the terms offered, they would immediately lay down their arms.

Hopton was determined to make one last defiant gesture and with the enemy knocking at his door, he prepared to despatch some of his infantry regiments to Pendennis and the Mount. Fairfax was exasperated. He could smash what was left of Hopton's force and yet the man would still not surrender. A further letter warned him not to presume on his patience.

At Tregony, the people thought that Hopton had surrendered and they greeted Fairfax with open arms. He was now within striking distance of Truro.

Hopton knew that his army faced annihilation and at last he sent a trumpeter with a letter, it asked for a meeting at Tresillian Bridge the next day to treat and conclude the surrender. No one was more relieved than Sir Thomas Fairfax. He'd done all he could to avoid bloodshed in Cornwall and he thanked God that common sense had finally prevailed.

The Royalist infantry regiments chosen to continue the fight marched away from Tresillian, Colonel Collins and 200 men to the Mount and Colonel Molesworth, Colonel Wise, Sir Thomas Hooper, Colonel John Arundell and Colonel Tremayne to Pendennis with another 800 – William and Jabe among them. They took the remaining supplies and Hopton's orders for the Governor, John Arundell of Trevice. As they marched by

the river at Tresillian, William looked at the trees on the far bank, their boughs bent to touch the water, as if in shame.

“What’s it all about? Four years of hell. We’ve seen terrible sights: lost friends and I’ve lost Richard. Will any of it make a difference? Will it hell! The King will make his peace with Parliament and life will be just as before.” Jabe didn’t comment.

William’s life on the farm would pick up where it left off. The girls were young women now but Joan would still be Joan and the old woman would be as cantankerous as ever. He would have to tell them about Richard: that would be hard. And then, of course, there was Ann. Would she still welcome him? Perhaps she’d turned to someone else for comfort. He had a lot to catch up on and a lot of work to do. He made up his mind, he wouldn’t be going to the castle.

Even before the official surrender, Colonel Trevanion’s regiment of 120 musketeers laid down their arms and Hannibal Bonython, the Governor of St Mawes Castle, asked to negotiate its surrender. Not a shot had been fired but nestled below a hill, it had never been intended for defence from land. Fairfax now held the eastern side of the river, on the other side was his ultimate objective, Pendennis Castle.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1646, Lord Hopton surrendered the Western Royalist Army at Tresillian Bridge and as he and Sir Thomas Fairfax signed the treaty it signalled the end of open warfare in Cornwall. The victorious Parliamentary Army acted with restraint: it maintained its discipline in victory. Lord Hopton left to join Prince Charles on Scilly.

The two sections of Royalist infantry still in service had gone their separate ways. A few men chose not to go to either and managed to lose themselves in the streets and opeways of Truro, William was among them. His goodbye to Jabe was difficult. “I don’t know what the future holds,” he said, “but our friendship’s the only good thing to come out of this. You know where I live and you’ll always be welcome.” Not another word passed between them, just a nod as William slipped away and headed up Street Pydar. During the time they’d spent together they’d formed a strong bond and they’d vowed to meet again.

William trudged the last part of his journey alone, grateful that he’d survived the conflict.

## Chapter 110

“You’re back then.” Joan hardly looked up as William entered the cottage: the real welcome came from Ruth.

“Father, we prayed so hard that you’d come home.” Tears streamed down her face. “We’ve heard about Richard, John told us.”

“John, has he been here? I thought he was in prison.”

“Yes Father, he’s living not far from here.” William frowned. There was much to catch up with.

“I don’t spose you’ve heard that my mother’s dead,” said Joan, “so there is some good news for you.”

William sighed: Joan hadn’t changed. “And my mother?”

“No idea, you’ll have to find out for yourself.”

"You've heard nothing of her, not been to see her?"

"I've been too busy, trying to keep this place going."

"Catherine, where's Catherine?"

"She's seeing that boy, Matthew James. She's with him a lot these days, I think they'll soon be wed."

William nodded: he liked the boy. "I'm off to see my mother."

"And her, I spose."

"Her?" William cast an embarrassed glance at Ruth. As he left the cottage he called back, "I'll see you later."

William's mother was well. She was sixty-eight but sprightly and still working for the Mohuns. "I've missed you and prayed that you and the boys would return unharmed. Catherine and Ruth told me about Richard, I cried all night." William stayed for an hour or so and then hurried to Ann's cottage. The sun still shone but thick clouds bounded across the sky with an urgency to match his own. As he approached, he could see a horse tethered outside and he lay back in the hedge to wait. His frustration increased with the passing minutes and it was more than half an hour before anyone appeared. It was a man, probably in his mid-60s. He looked furtive as he came out, as if he wished not to be seen. He mounted his horse and rode off.

William waited for a few more minutes and then approached the door. He knocked, wondering what to expect. Within seconds, Ann was there. She was in shock but then she embraced him. It was a marked contrast to Joan's welcome.

They went inside and Ann was full of questions, it had been so long since they'd seen each other. William only half heard the conversation: he was still thinking of the man he'd seen leave the cottage. He had to know who he was.

"You seem distant my love, I know it's been a while but something's affecting you."

"That man, I have to know what he was doing here."

"He's nothing, just someone who called to see me."

"And what was his purpose?"

Ann looked at the table, she didn't reply.

"All the time I was away I worried that I'd return and find you married or with someone else. If there's another man then I need to know."

Ann was disturbed by the questions and she snapped at him. "How do you think I've managed to live while you've been away these past four years? I never knew if you'd return."

It was suddenly clear to him, she'd become a whore, offering herself to anyone who would pay the price of a meal. "You could've got a bleddy job, earned an honest living."

"A job? I have a job but it pays so little. It's the war, there's been nothing."



“Nothing except offering your body to anybody who’d pay.”

“No, that’s not true. I never...”

“You must be the talk of the area. And me too, with they who knew what we meant to each other.”

“Meant ... you said meant.”

“I...I didn’t mean that. Oh, I don’t know what I mean.”

He stormed out of the cottage. It was the first time in years that he’d left without a kiss – without having to rise from her bed.

The sound of her crying grew weaker as he trudged up the lane through the squelching mud. Tears clouded his eyes, made everything out of focus: he wiped them away. The furze was early, the sight of it always softened him, increased his love of Cornwall – and of Ann.

His pace became slower: he was thinking. He’d been devastated to find that she’d been with other men but it wasn’t her fault. He’d reacted as always: his temper was fierce at times. He tried to control it but sometimes he couldn’t. Then he would regret it. Perhaps, this time for the rest of his life.

It was late but how could he leave things like this. He turned back, walking quicker now, anxious to see her again, to say he was sorry. There was no horse this time, just Ann stoking the fire. She turned, not knowing if his mood had changed but she could tell from his eyes that it had, that all would be well.

It was three hours later when William arrived home. Supper was on the table and Joan and the two girls had started their meal. Catherine stood up and embraced him. The atmosphere was tense: Joan had told them where he’d been.

It was ages before William fell asleep. His mind was full of the war, his homecoming and of Ann. He’d learned things tonight which had made him angry, filled him with pity but, most important of all, sealed their love. The man with the horse was her husband’s father: he’d lost his own wife and had asked Ann if she would take her place. If Ann was guilty of anything it was that she’d led him along until she knew if William would return. She swore that they’d not so much as kissed and William believed her. More shocking had been the revelation about her landlord, James Treleigh. He’d owned her cottage and ever since her husband’s death she’d struggled to pay the rent. James Treleigh had forced her into an arrangement. He’d called every week, either for the money or payment in-kind. She could rarely pay and that didn’t disappoint him.

William was thankful to whoever had killed him but his death had increased Ann’s problems. Rebecca Treleigh knew nothing of the arrangement and when her husband died, she expected regular payment. When Ann was unable to pay, she’d turned to her father-in-law for help. She’d sworn on her life that money was the only thing that attracted her to him. Now William would help with the rent, he didn’t know how, but he would find it.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March, Sir Thomas Fairfax sent two regiments to Pennycomequick to blockade Pendennis Castle. They arrived just in time to prevent the Royalist defenders destroying Arwenack House: it became the Parliamentarians’ base for the siege. From there, Fairfax gazed up at Pendennis Castle. Over to the west was Dennis Fort: it guarded the entrance to the Helford and the little port at Gweek. It had fallen on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, when it ran out of ammunition. On the other side of Falmouth Haven was St Mawes Castle: his soldiers manned the turrets.

Fairfax summoned John Arundell to surrender but he refused. He was seventy, maybe older, but he had the spirit of a man half his age. Like St Mawes, the castle had been initially built to withstand an attack from sea but additional defences had been constructed, some facing landwards. Fairfax couldn't wait until it gave in, he left Colonel Hammond in charge while he returned to Bodmin to receive Warwick, Lord Mohun's surrender.

## Chapter 111

As Rebecca Treleigh and John Ennor prepared to leave, their escort of six troopers waited by the gate. "Tell Jenefer we should be back tomorrow," she said, "but she shouldn't worry if it takes an extra day."

"Can I say where we're going?" asked John.

"No, say nothing. It's better she doesn't know."

The riders made their way through the lanes and out onto the road. It was fine weather, a good day for the journey. "If all goes well, I'll introduce you to a man who may do you some good. Just watch your manners and do as I say."

"I will," he said, "am I to know who it is?"

"We head for Bodmin to meet Sir Thomas Fairfax, the leader of the Parliamentary Army. He wants to meet those who have helped the cause in Cornwall."

"And that includes us?"

"It does. Afterwards, he has a meeting with the leading Cornish agent provocateurs."

"So, at last I'll meet the man who controls our area?"

Rebecca smiled, "Not exactly." For a moment there was silence and then John turned to look at her.

He'd no need to ask the question. "Yes John, I thought you'd guessed."

"I...I'd no idea. What, even when we met at Truro?"

"Before that, even the priest reported to me."

"But I thought..."

"That it was a man. I'm sure you did, I'm sure you did."

"I'm sorry, perhaps you should have this." John had kept the priest's book as insurance and he now passed it to Rebecca. "It's caused me pain enough: I hope it was worth it."

They arrived at Bodmin ahead of Fairfax and were shown into a room already occupied by ten people. The general entered and outlined the situation in Cornwall and beyond. He told them that Pendennis and the Mount would soon fall and when the King returned to the throne it would be with his wings tightly clipped. He answered their questions as best he could and then invited Rebecca Treleigh to join him for further

discussions. John spent some time in the town until Rebecca was ready to leave. He thought that she looked rather flushed but was too polite to enquire the reason.

## Chapter 112

### The King Surrenders

The Prince remained in Scilly for six weeks, time enough to reflect on the defeat and on the harsh living conditions there. In mid-April, twenty Parliamentary ships were spotted off the islands and he was advised to leave. He sailed for Jersey on The Proud Black Eagle. With him was John Grenville and Francis Godolphin, the Governor of Scilly. The islands immediately surrendered to Sir George Ayscue and after a short stay in Jersey, Prince Charles left for the safety of France.

There had been many twists and turns in the war but in the end, it was Fairfax and Cromwell with their New Model Army which made the difference. The last Royalist Army dispersed at Stow-on-the-Wold on the 21<sup>st</sup> March. Exeter surrendered on the 13<sup>th</sup> April. The garrison marched out with the infant Princess Henrietta and her retinue. Two days later, St Michael's Mount surrendered but there was no sign of Sir Richard Grenville. He'd appealed to Prince Charles for release but the request was declined. He was to remain a prisoner, either in Jersey or on Lundy. Somehow, he'd escaped. Perhaps his men had rescued him or a Cornish guard had conveniently forgotten to lock his cell door one night. After all, there was little point in handing this Cornishman over for certain execution. Whatever the means of his escape, he was free and in France. Only Pendennis Castle remained defiant but surely that would soon fall.

King Charles was forced to come to terms with defeat and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1646 he surrendered – to the Scots.

## Chapter 113

John and Jenefer Ennor looked out from the top of the Beacon. From there they could see St Ives and all the way up the coast to Padstow. The past four years had been traumatic, life changing, but John had ended up on the winning side. Their children, the one in his arms and the one growing inside her, would be safe now and soon he would take them to see their grandparents.

John was in thoughtful mood, his eyes focussed on the gentle swell of the water far below and at the two rocks about a mile from the cliffs. "Jenefer, that old woman who told you it'll be another boy, do you believe her?"

"I don't know. She's mostly right but not always. Why do you ask?"

"It's just that...well if it is, then I'd like to call him Richard, if you don't mind"

Jenefer squeezed his arm: it was also her choice. "Do you think they'll put the King back on the throne? Only there are those who say that they don't want him."

"Me for one," said John. "I'd like to do away with the monarchy and let Parliament build a fairer society: one where everyone has an equal say and an equal right."

There was much to be done and John was destined to play a part. The struggle would take a while but there was no going back.



Tony Mansell is the author of several books on aspects of Cornish history. In 2011 he was made a Bardh Kernow (Cornish Bard) for his writing and research, taking the name of Skrifur Istor. He has a wide interest in Cornish history, is a researcher with the Cornish National Music Archive specialising in brass bands, and a sub-editor with Cornish Story.