

# THE OLD PRETENDER<sup>1</sup>

BY H. ADDINGTON BRUCE

THE Stuart kings of England, both as monarchs and as men, have fared badly at the hands of historians. No colors have been too black in which to paint them. Their boundless egotism and utter disregard for the wishes of their subjects, their loose habits, their craven irresolution in time of emergency—every trait that would darken the picture has been mercilessly emphasized. And, to tell the truth, it would be an unprofitable task to attempt their vindication. England, after a second experiment, would have no more of them, and England acted wisely. While the House of Hanover, on which the succession ultimately fell, was scarcely a conspicuous improvement on the House of Stuart, still it was an improvement, if only because the principle of responsible government took root under the Hanoverian monarchs and developed to a degree unthinkable under a Stuart dynasty.

For, as the history of the Restoration period shows very plainly, the one great failing of the Stuarts was that which brought the Bourbons to equally unhappy estate—they learned nothing and they forgot nothing. With them it was a case of rule or ruin. The ferment of ideas among the nations, the altered standpoint from which men were beginning to view their rulers, the steady working of the leaven of democracy, had no meaning for them. This is apparent even in the history of the Stuart whose character makes the strongest appeal to posterity—James Francis Edward, the Old Pretender, or, as the Jacobites preferred to call him, the Old Chevalier. His lifetime of exile and repeated failures to win the throne from which his father had been driven did not have the embittering effect on his nature visible in the career of his son, “Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Chevalier;” but neither did his experiences enlarge his

vision. He died as he had lived, a pathetic figure, brave but unenlightened, and absolutely incapable of appreciating the futility of his hopes.

Yet James Francis Edward has very real claims on our interest, even on our admiration. Nowhere is this made so clear as in the pages of his latest and best biographer, Mr. Martin Haile, who, with the aid of new and convincing documentary evidence, demolishes for all time the faulty but long prevalent idea that the unfortunate son of James II and Mary of Modena was in reality little better than the most worthless of his family. He was, as Mr. Haile conclusively proves, a man of conscience and honor, unswerving in his devotion to what he deemed his duty. Nothing could tempt him to forego his efforts to establish himself on the throne of his fathers. The offer of the crown of Poland, made at a time when he might reasonably have been expected to grasp at it with eagerness, was courteously but firmly declined. “I should think I failed to my country and my subjects,” he wrote, “did I pursue any means which should put me at a greater distance and make me less able to provide for their happiness by my Restoration.” And in like manner, much to the amazement of many of his followers, he resolutely refused to attain the lost kingship at the sacrifice of his religious convictions. “I doubt not,” he sent word to his mother, “but that the positive and circumstantial reports which are prevalent of my change of religion will have reached you, but you know me too well to be alarmed by them, and I can assure you that, by the grace of God, you will sooner see me dead than out of the church.” As a husband he was devoted to his wife, the charming but difficult Clementina of Poland; as a father he was earnest for the welfare of his children; and far more than any other Stuart he appreciated the loyalty of those who clung to the fatal fortunes of his house.

These were his admirable traits, and

<sup>1</sup> James Francis Edward, the Old Chevalier. By Martin Haile. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$4. net.

they go far towards explaining the love and enthusiasm which he inspired despite his habit of cold reserve and reticent self-possession. He had defects no less apparent. As has been said, he was not at all receptive to new ideas; the changes visible about him and the constant buffetings of fortune which he experienced led to no broadening of his mental horizon. He was a poor judge of men, and placed equal trust in worthy and unworthy advisers. He lacked initiative and the ability to take decisive action when it would count for most. But in judging him it is necessary to bear in mind the circumstances in which his life was spent. Almost from his birth he became the plaything of European diplomacy, and was passed from state to state as the exigencies of policy demanded. False hopes were sedulously cultivated in him; he was flattered by traitors and dogged by spies. English statesmanship was not above using him as a means of gaining its ends with the sovereigns who successively occupied the throne which, on the inheritance theory, was rightfully his. The English people, with much the same end in view but with no real desire for a second Restoration, flaunted the white rose in the face of the elected monarchy and drank deep libations to the King over the water. So that, if James Francis Edward constantly found himself tricked and baffled when he tried to turn his dreams into reality, everything conspired to keep the spirit of endeavor alive in him. His life undoubtedly would have been far happier and far more useful if he had abandoned his pretensions; but under the conditions surrounding him this was out of the question.

As it was, he led a by no means cheerless existence. His youth was spent amid the romantic environs of the palace of St. Germain, which had been handed over to his father, the fugitive James II, by Louis XIV. Here, while James was desperately striving to win back by arms the crown that his mad obstinacy had lost, he passed a care-free childhood, and grew to be a high-spirited, most attractive boy. We catch glimpses of him from time to time; now romping with his little sister on the broad terraces

of the palace; now, in infantile accents, welcoming his father after the disastrous battle of the Boyne; a little later—tall, slender, and elegant—making his *début* at the French court. According to Fénelon, whom Mr. Haile rightly terms no mean judge of princes, which I do with all my heart. Be a good Catholic; fear God; obey your mother next after God; be entirely dependent upon the King of France." At eighteen he set up a small court of his own, still in the palace of St. Germain—a pitiful shadow of a court, but enough to make him eager for the substance. And at twenty he began the work that had proved too much for his father and was to prove too much for him.

Unexpected delays in sailing from France, heavy gales, a watchful English fleet, a losing sea fight, a frantic and barely successful retreat—such, in brief, was the history of the expedition of 1708, the first attempt by James Francis Edward to vindicate his right to reign in "my own kingdom." He had to no purpose begged the French captain to set him ashore in Scotland; he came back to France bitterly disappointed but not a whit discouraged. The young blood was running too high in his veins for that. Plunging at once into the War of the Spanish Succession, he won his spurs at the battle of Oudenarde, carrying himself so gallantly that, it is said, even the victorious English heard of his achievements with "beaming faces." At Malplaquet he led twelve hundred horse in twelve mad charges against Marlborough's German contingent, and finally dispersed the Germans with a valiant intrepidity which won the admiration of both friend and foe. That night, as Mr. Haile reminds us, the English soldiers among the allies drank the health of the Pretender; but his very bravery was only the means of strengthening the resolution of the English Government to suppress him at all hazards. For, when it came to making terms of peace, one

clause on which England's envoys pitilessly insisted was that Louis XIV should expel James Francis Edward from the territories of France and should henceforth give him no help by land or sea.

Retiring to the Castle of Bar-le-Duc, in the friendly Duchy of Lorraine, James Francis Edward now began in vital earnest to plan his restoration. From certain of the Tory leaders in England came friendly overtures, culminating in definite proposals to make him king on the death of Anne, if only he would become a Protestant. From Scotland, always a stalwart center of Jacobitism, came tidings that he had but to speak the word and the clansmen would rise in his behalf. Joyfully he set about making preparations, but, with characteristic Stuart dilatoriness, he moved so slowly that Anne's death found him still unready. Long before he took ship to sail for Scotland, George I had landed in England, had been crowned, and had practically put down the Scottish rebellion fomented and headed by the Earl of Mar. The battle of Preston, when fifteen hundred Jacobites were taken prisoners, sounded the death-knell of James Francis Edward's hopes. Still he would not acknowledge that his chance had gone. On the second of January, 1716, more than a month after Preston had been won and lost, he landed near Aberdeen, accompanied only by five gentlemen and a handful of servants.

It was a miserable home-coming for a king, and made the more miserable by the evident disappointment of the Scotch that he had failed to bring a fleet. But they rallied about him with a fine devotion. "The affection of the people," he wrote to Bolingbroke, "is beyond all expression." Many of the grand ladies of Scotland lent their jewels to adorn the crown with which he soon was solemnly invested. This, though, was the only touch of splendor to his coronation. And presently, as the enemy's troops drew nearer in overwhelming force, the chill of despair seized even James Francis Edward himself. Only a few of his captains, men like Gordon of Glenbucket, counseled giving battle. "For God's sake," cried Gordon to Huntly, "let us do something worthy memory, and, if we

fall, let us die like men of honor and resolution. Our cause is good and just!" The rest were for retreat, if not submission. One by one the Jacobite strongholds fell, while the scattered clansmen sought safety in the Highlands. And at last, bowing to the inevitable, James Francis Edward once more embarked for France.

He had tried, he had failed, and for the moment was utterly discredited. No European ruler dared receive him, and England was inexorable in the demand that he be driven across the Alps and into the Papal States. The Pope, as James Francis Edward well knew, would give him a hearty welcome; but he realized, too, that by accepting the hospitality of the Pope he would weaken his cause in England. At first he sought to temporize by establishing his little court at Avignon, where for a few brief months English and Scotch Jacobites united in a merry enough existence. Then came the signing of the Triple Alliance between England, France, and Holland, with the express proviso that the Pretender must be constrained to leave Avignon with all his followers, never again to return to France. Early in February, 1716, he crossed the Mont Cenis in a blinding snow-storm, and by slow stages made his way to Rome.

Safe at last from the vindictiveness of his enemies, James Francis Edward's thoughts now turned to marriage. Thence developed one of the most romantic of the many romantic episodes in the story of the Stuarts. A match having been arranged with the Princess Clementina, granddaughter of the famous Sobieski, King of Poland, the English Government bestirred itself to prevent the union. All other efforts failing, George I, as Elector of Hanover, requested the Emperor to arrest the promised bride and hold her prisoner until she should agree not to marry the Pretender. This "odious injunction," as Mr. Haile properly calls it, was actually carried out, and the Princess was lodged in the Castle of Innsbruck. James Francis Edward, meanwhile, had gone to Spain, where Philip V was fitting out a large fleet for a descent on Eng-

land. But among his adherents were four gallant Irishmen—Wogan, Gaydon, Misset, and O'Toole—who vowed that prison bars should not keep his bride from him. Making their way to Innspruck, they contrived to get word to Clementina that they had come to rescue her. They found her eager and willing for the adventure. Their plan was to smuggle a young Irish girl into the castle as a pretended sweetheart of the Princess's gentleman usher, effect a change of clothing, and have the Princess walk out in the guise of the pseudo-sweetheart.

Everything went as arranged. At eleven o'clock of a stormy night the Princess boldly left the castle, met Wogan, and by him was led to an inn where the other conspirators were in waiting. Then followed a wild three days' drive, during which the Princess was so excited that she could not take a moment's sleep. Her all-absorbing wish, as Mr. Haile tells the story, was "to learn all she could of that England of which, since she was a little child playing with her companions, she had always fancied herself queen. The court, the habits, the beauty of the ladies and their style of dress, the names of the principal families, were the subjects of her close and eager questioning, at the same time learning all the English words she could from her companions." *En route* there were many mishaps; twice the carriage broke down. But the four Irish gentlemen—knighted afterwards for their bravery, the only reward poor James Francis Edward could give them—overcame all difficulties, and safely carried the Princess out of the Emperor's dominions, after which she was speedily married by proxy, with the significant clause in the marriage agreement that "if the said princess shall be prevented by violence from joining us after the marriage has been celebrated, the said marriage shall be of no effect."

James Francis Edward himself, when he had returned to Italy after the wreck of the Spanish enterprise, was delighted with his bride. "I cannot hide from such a friend as you," he told Cardinal Gualterio, "that in the midst of misfortune I count myself the happiest man in the world." A little more than a year

later his happiness was intensified by the advent of a son, news of whose birth was at once formally communicated to the Emperor, the Czar, Louis XV, and other monarchs of Europe. In sending the welcome tidings to the English Jacobites, James Francis Edward hastened to assure them that his "brave, lusty boy shall be dressed and looked after, as much as the climate will allow, in the English way; for, though I can't help his being born in Italy, yet as much as in me lies he shall be English for the rest all over." And, further, "Let this keep up your hearts and courage for better days, which I am laboring to hasten all I can." Proud, hopeful, ardent James Francis Edward, still unable to realize that the Stuarts had had their day!

Queen Clementina, though, soon saw the truth clearly, and in the first flush of her disappointment became estranged from her liege lord; going so far, in fact, as to cut off all communication with him and retire into a convent. But the estrangement was only temporary, and the reconciliation, when it came, was complete. Thereafter, until Clementina's death in 1735, James Francis Edward's domestic life was idyllic. Could he but have forgotten that he had a claim on the English throne, his happiness would have been unalloyed. But he could not forget, it was not in the interests of his followers to let him forget, and the diplomats of Europe still found him a useful instrument with which to worry England—so on he went, pleading, expostulating, intriguing, writing a multitude of letters, absorbed in the cares of a puppet state.

After the death of Clementina he turned with redoubled love and anxiety to his children, particularly to his eldest born, Charles Edward. Providence might withhold the crown from him; at least he would labor to win it for his son. Again the bitterest disappointment. Carefully and deftly as he laid his plans, the rebellion of 1745 ended as had the rising of 1715. With a heart full of hope, the Young Pretender sailed for Scotland, just as his father had done thirty years before, and, like his father, he met in Scotland little save disaster. But, unlike his father, as the Old Pretender learned with an aching heart, he

failed to meet disaster manfully. It overwhelmed him, bore him down, changed his whole nature, alienated him from his best friends, even from James Francis Edward himself. Not once did father and son meet after the latter's departure on his "long journey" to Scotland. The son's later years were spent in aimless wandering; the father's in trying to rouse him to noble effort. And thus at last death overtook the Old Pretender, in his seventy-eighth year, bent and worn, but still hopeful that the House of Stuart would one day come into its own.

Such is the story told by Mr. Haile, such the picture of the man who, had fortune been kinder, might have shed some greatly needed luster on one of the least worthy of English dynasties. And it should be added that, availing himself of privileges afforded by no less a personage than the present King of England, Mr. Haile does more than merely write a biography of the Old Pretender; he gives us a thoroughgoing and most valuable study of English Jacobitism, based in many of its details on material hitherto inaccessible to the historian.

## Comment on Current Books

### *Bradford's Plymouth*

To the Jameson series of original narratives of early American history has now been added a reprint of William Bradford's "History of Plymouth Plantation."<sup>1</sup> As historians are aware, this is a most important source book, for without it there would be some serious gaps in our knowledge of the beginnings of the United States. Its author was for many years Governor of old Plymouth, and writes of its founding and early development with a wealth of detail not to be found elsewhere. Curiously enough, although his manuscript has been in existence for more than two hundred and fifty years, it was first published only fifty years ago. Ten years ago an official edition was issued by the State of Massachusetts, and this edition forms the basis of the present reprint. The editor, the late Mr. William T. Davis, the well-known Plymouth antiquarian, who died only a few weeks ago, has given the text a rather more liberal annotation than has been customary in this series of reprints, and has prefaced it with an excellent biographical and historical introduction. Incidentally he takes up the difficult questions connected with "Mourt's Relation" of 1622, the book in which was first printed Bradford's valuable and interesting journal of the voyage of the Mayflower.

### *The Unfinished Task*

The author of this stirring statement<sup>2</sup> is concerned with only those responsibilities of the Church which are presented in the condition of non-Christian or nominally Christian lands, such as China, Russia, South

America. It is, to a large extent, a statement of facts, many of them little known and worth knowing. It is a plain, clear, crisp recital by a recognized authority, widely traveled, and personally acquainted with the facts he relates concerning existing conditions. The extent of the task before the Church, the obstacles to be overcome at home and abroad, the partial success already achieved, and the resources now available for it, are all so presented that the statement is practically an argument for greater activity. That the Church has an equally appealing task at home, and is adequate to both tasks together, if the apathy can be shaken off which hinders each, Dr. Barton is not the man to deny.

### *Louis II of Bavaria*

To American readers the necessity of a Life of the late King of Bavaria is not apparent. To German readers it may be. If so, they have in Madame Tschudi's volume an attempt at a rather gossipy biography.<sup>3</sup> She calls her subject King Ludwig II. Why not either König Ludwig or King Louis? He had, it is true, occasional admirable stirrings towards a realization and popularization of art, especially architecture and music. This was shown first in his plans for making his capital larger, more ornate and beautiful, and second in his encouragement and support of Richard Wagner at a vital time of need for that composer, longing for popularity and financial backing alike. But the mad monarch, abnormal and unhappy, remains an uninspiring figure. The real value of such a volume as this is found not so much in the narration of certain romantic

<sup>1</sup> Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606-1646. Edited by William T. Davis. (Original Narratives of Early American History.) Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$3, net.

<sup>2</sup> The Unfinished Task. By James L. Barton, D.D. The Student Volunteer Movement, New York. 50c.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig, the Second King of Bavaria. By Clara Tschudi. Translated from the Norwegian by Ethel Harriet Hearn. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.50, net.