

# CHARLES II'S JERSEY ROMANCE

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IN his well known "History of the English People", Green writes of the Duke of Monmouth as the eldest of Charles the Second's illegitimate children, but Doctor Hoskins in his book, *Charles II in the Channel Islands*, based on a remarkably full and accurate journal of the daily history of the Island of Jersey from 1643 to 1650 by John Chevalier, maintains that his eldest son was born on the Island of Jersey following what was probably his first real love affair.

Charles I had sent his son, the future Charles II, in 1646 to the Island of Jersey in the Channel Islands, for safety's sake, when the troubles between the King and Parliament had reached a very dangerous stage. Prince Charles at that time was not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age.

In Jersey, which was staunchly Royalist as Guernsey was Parliamentarian, he was received with rejoicing. For several months he enjoyed the splendid hospitality of Sir George Carteret, the leading Seigneur of this lovely Island. In the fine old Trinity Manor, the ancestral home of the Carterets, set amidst picturesque lake and lovely lawns, the graceful and elegant young Prince, according to local tradition, became much attached to the youngest and most beautiful daughter of the Seigneur of Trinity. It is easy to understand what a glamour a fascinating young Prince, heir to the throne of England, would have for an unsophisticated maiden, especially in such romantic surroundings. But, indeed, whatever may have been the mutual attraction, like Montaigne's heroine, she would probably have said; "*Si on me presse de dire pourquoi je l'aymois, je sens que cela ne se peult exprimer qu'en respondant: 'parce que c'estoit luy, parce que c'estoit moy'.*"<sup>1</sup>

Of this love affair we have no particulars, but evidently a son was born in 1646 or 1647, some time after the Prince's departure.

The mutilation of baptismal entries in the registers of the Parish Church of Trinity about 1648, and the fact that a brother of this youngest daughter, Marguerite, though a member of so conspicuously loyal a family as the de Carterets, had taken up arms against the King, Charles I, and was inciting his fellow

1. "If I am pressed to say why I loved him, I feel I can only say in reply; because it was him, because it was me."

citizens to mutiny and sedition, are significant. But it was not until 1668 that we find definite proof of Charles II's past care and present concern for this offspring. On April 11th, of this year 1668, we read of a young man presenting himself at the Jesuit College of St. Andrew in Rome, asking to be admitted as a novice. He was poorly clad, and though speaking only French, claimed to be an English subject—James de la Cloche, of Jersey.

But Oliva, the General of the Jesuits, soon discovered the secret history of the new novice. He was the eldest natural son of Charles II, and, in King Charles's own words, a son "for whom we have always entertained a singular affection, partly because he was born to us when we were not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, and of a young lady of a family of the most distinguished in our Kingdom...and partly because of the excellent understanding which we have always found in him, and the eminent learning to which, by our means, he has attained."

De la Cloche brought with him to Rome three authentic documents which left no doubt as to the truth of his story. The first was an autograph certificate from Charles, dated from Whitehall, September 27th, 1665, saying "Our natural son, James Stuart, who in obedience to our order and command has lived in France and other countries under a feigned name, up to the year 1665, when we have deigned to take him under our charge, and in the year following, he being in London, we have commanded him to live under another feigned name—namely, that of de la Cloche du Bourg de Jersey".

Now, de la Cloche had grown up in strong Protestant atmosphere. The Carterets, though loyal to the Stuarts, were also staunch Protestants.

Recognizing this, Charles wrote his second testimonial to Holland, whither the youth had gone to pursue his studies, and therein assigned him "£500 yearly, which it shall not be lawful to him to enjoy or possess unless he reside in London and follow the religion of his family, and observe the liturgy of England". But in the same year he received this letter, de la Cloche, renouncing paternal favour and worldly goods, started for Hamburg instead of London; he was there converted to Catholicism, and abjured his former Protestant faith. Now despite Charles's former insistence as to the religion this son must follow, he writes to the General of the Jesuits rejoicing at the conversion to Roman Catholicism "du jeune Cavalier la Cloche de Jersey",

and asks Oliva to hurry on his ordination and send him to London in as private a manner as possible. In a later part of the same letter Charles writes as follows: "Great and various reasons connected with the peace of our Kingdom have, hitherto, withheld us from publicly recognizing him as our son, but this will be but of short duration, as we are now resolved to recognize him in a few years. . . . And as he is in no way known here, this business has been treated under the greatest secrecy: We are therefore enabled to converse in all security with him *and practise the rites of the Roman Catholic Church without exciting in our Court the shadow of a doubt that we belong to that persuasion.*"

By the same courier the King sent a letter to this son full of paternal solicitude and addressing him as "The Princee Stuart", even going so far as to say: "You might lay claim to honours and titles as great, if not greater, than those of the Duke of Monmouth. . . . Should liberty of conscience and the Catholic religion be restored to this Kingdom, you might even entertain hopes of arriving to the crown; . . . because we may assure you that, should we . . . and the Duke of York die without heirs, the Kingdom will be yours".

A little later Charles seemed to get uneasy lest he should have gone too far. At any rate he wrote to Oliva that care be taken lest his son let out secrets, for "at the present time it is a truth fully agreed upon by persons of the soundest judgment that, of all the evils that could surround us, the certainty that we were a Catholic would be the greatest and most likely to cause our death".

James was ordered, with every possible precaution for ensuring secrecy, to come at once to England, alone and in lay costume, and to avoid all society of his fellows "both by letter and conversation, for it is not reasonable that so insignificant a gratification should run into risk and perhaps ruin of our designs." He was to take the name of "Henri de Rohan", and to give out that he was the son of a rich preacher deceased. He was to land, not in London, but at some other port, and thence drive to the capital and at once seek the Queen Consort. Such was the importance attached by Charles to his person and the secrets in his possession.

On November 18th, 1668, Charles wrote to Oliva that his "very dear son", after a brief sojourn in London, was returning to Rome accompanied by *another Jesuit*, on a confidential mission from his father to the Pope, charged with certain commissions which were only to be explained verbally, and with a

stipulation that as soon as he had fulfilled them, he was to return with a verbal response.

After this letter, "James de la Cloche" disappears from History. This mysterious individual, known as a man noted for his learning and piety, and in the confidence of the Jesuits, has been identified by some as the unfortunate victim so often discussed as the "Man with the Iron Mask". In a letter to his sister, Henrietta of Orleans, Charles speaks of but "one person more" who knew of the secret treaty of alliance between England and France against Holland, and including the idea of the restoration of Catholicism in England. The others were this sister, Louis XIV and Charles himself.

It seems possible, therefore, that Charles II and Louis XIV may have felt their safety—perhaps their very existence—depended on the perpetual silence of James de la Cloche.