



FRAGMENT OF CAPTAIN BLAKE'S SKULL,
MOUNTED AS A PAIR TO HIS PORTRAIT

PLATE I.



MINIATURE PORTRAIT OF CAPTAIN ROBERT BLAKE,
BY ANDREW BENJAMIN LENS.

To face page 195.

NOTES ON SOME FAMILY RELICS OF THE
JACOBITE REBELLION, 1745.

By V. B. CROWTHER-BEYNON, M.A. F.S.A.

I feel that a humble apology is due for venturing to read before such a Society as this a paper which, as I am only too well aware, has no archaeological value whatsoever. The most that can be said for it is that it attempts to tell the story of a small group of personal relics, one of which is of a somewhat unusual character, while there is, as I hope to show, sufficient independent evidence to place their authenticity beyond any reasonable doubt. Such interest as attaches to them, however, is entirely personal and can claim no right to be considered historic.

The central figure is one Captain Robert Blake, who was a collateral descendant of our national hero, Admiral Robert Blake, who (as a rare medal in the British Museum quaintly records) 'fought at once with Ships and Castles. He dared the Fury of all the Elements, and left an Example to Posterity which is incredible, to be imitated.'

Admiral (or as he is more frequently called in contemporary writings, General) Blake died unmarried, and Captain Blake was, I believe, descended from the admiral's brother, George, and not only himself bore his famous kinsman's Christian name but also bestowed it subsequently on his own eldest son.

He was born in 1720 and in due course joined the army. In a MS. Army list of 1745 his appointment appears, dated 24th January, 1740-1, to a lieutenancy in Col. Murray's regiment of foot (the 57th, subsequently the 46th and now represented by the 2nd battn. of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry). The date of his ensign's commission I have been unable to trace nor have I any record of his earlier military career.

With regard to the circumstances of the Jacobite rebellion, 1745, it will be remembered that on July 25th of that year Prince Charles Edward Stuart, commonly known as the Young Pretender, landed with seven adherents on

the west coast of Scotland, and gathering round him a body of Highland followers, erected his standard at Glenfinnan on August 19th. In some respects the moment was not ill-chosen, for owing to the recent campaign in the Netherlands and the disaster at Fontenoy, the British army was in a somewhat disorganised state, and its commander-in-chief, the duke of Cumberland, was on the continent, as was also King George II. But if 'Prince Charlie' was counting on an enthusiastic and general welcome from the Highland chieftains, his reception must have proved somewhat of a disappointment. Sympathetic as they doubtless were to the Stuart cause, the heads of the clans were for the most part wise enough to see the hazardous, if not hopeless, nature of the enterprise and did all they could to dissuade the prince from his project. Indeed it was probably due in a great measure to the infection of the latter's enthusiasm and the attraction of his own personality that he was enabled to secure the adherence, against their better judgment, of so many of the chiefs and their clansmen.

At Glenfinnan the Pretender's army numbered about twelve hundred, a total which was more than trebled by the 4th September when Perth was reached. Here his father was proclaimed king with Prince Charles as regent.

The prince was opposed by the commander-in-chief in Scotland, Sir John Cope, concerning whose conduct and military ability so much controversy has taken place. The force under his command was numerically inferior and included but a small proportion of seasoned troops. Comprised in Cope's army were seven hundred of Murray's regiment, known as "Murray's bucks," in which Captain Robert Blake was serving.

It is not proposed to enter in detail into the events connected with the '45 rebellion, but it may be recalled that Cope's original plan was to march north from Edinburgh to meet the insurgent army, hoping by the infliction of a decisive blow to nip the rebellion in the bud. This plan, however, was not long adhered to. Cope found the rough and mountainous country which he had to traverse almost impracticable for the unwieldy baggage train which he was obliged to carry with him, while the majority of the inhabitants were the reverse of friendly

and missed no opportunity of robbing him. The expectation that a large number of loyal Highlanders would join him on his march and swell the ranks of his somewhat inadequate army was not fulfilled; and furthermore Cope quickly realised that an encounter in a wild mountain district would be all in favour of the prince's army, composed as it was of active and hardy northerners thoroughly accustomed to moving over a steep and rugged country.

The statistics appearing in the various accounts are extremely conflicting, but it appears probable that Cope's army at this point numbered about 1500, including 100 dragoons. Having satisfied himself that his better plan was to return and defend Edinburgh, he left his dragoons to guard the passage of the Forth and made a detour to the eastward by way of Inverness to Aberdeen. Here he embarked his army in transports for Dunbar, where he landed on 16th September and was met by the unwelcome intelligence that he was too late and that the capital was already in the hands of the rebels.

The prince, meanwhile, finding to his chagrin that Cope had evaded battle by the change of tactics just referred to, had hastened forward unchecked and entered Edinburgh without a blow being struck, his advent being acclaimed by the populace with apparent joy and enthusiasm.

The opportunity for trying conclusions with the enemy, however, was close at hand. On the 19th September Cope began his thirty-mile march from Dunbar to Edinburgh, reaching Haddington the same day. On the 20th, learning that the insurgent army was advancing to meet him, he selected what he thought to be a favourable position to meet the expected attack. This was a stretch of flat ground close to the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, having the coast villages of Prestonpans and Cockenzie on the north and Tranent on the south, this latter village being on rising ground at the foot of which extended a stretch of bogland bounded by a deep ditch running east and west. Here the two armies came in sight of each other about midday on the 20th, the rebels taking up a position on the higher ground near Tranent, and separated from the royalist troops by the morass and ditch already mentioned. The rest of the day was occupied in reconnoitring and some

slight skirmishes, and as night fell both forces bivouacked on the field.

The attack was delivered by the rebel army in the thick mist of early dawn on the following morning, Saturday, 21st September, and within a quarter of an hour or less the issue was decided. It has sometimes been contended that Cope's defeat was due to his having been caught completely unawares. There is, however, ample evidence to show that this was not the case. From the moment the armies were in touch with each other, his outposts had noted all the movements of the prince's force. Cope's men received their orders to stand to their arms at least an hour before the attack was made, and fires had been kept burning during the darkness in advance of Cope's lines, so that a surprise attack in its fullest sense was impossible.

Such miscalculation as occurred was due to a piece of good fortune for the prince. A young sportsman in the locality, named Anderson, who was with the Jacobite army and had an intimate knowledge of the ground from having habitually shot snipe in the marsh, was able to guide the attacking force down to the lower ground by a concealed path, the existence of which was quite unsuspected by either side. In this way the prince's army came within striking distance at least three quarters of an hour before they could have attacked had they advanced by the anticipated route by way of Seton, a village lying further to the east.

In spite of the gallant efforts of Cope and his officers to encourage their men, a regular panic seems to have set in at the very outset, and what remained of the Hanoverian army was soon in full flight, the guns abandoned and the rout complete.

Lord Elcho, in his *Short Account of the Affairs in Scotland in the Years 1744-6*, gives the number of casualties on both sides. He was present at the battle as personal aide-de-camp to the prince and describes it in considerable detail. According to his story the Jacobite losses were four officers and fifty men killed, and one officer and eighty men wounded. On the royalist side seven officers and five hundred men were killed, eighteen officers and nine hundred men wounded, while five hundred unwounded were taken prisoners. A list is added of the

officers in each of the regiments engaged, the wounded among them being distinguished by a 'W' opposite their names. In the list of Murray's regiment six officers, including Captain Blake, are so specified out of a total of eighteen.

James Grant, in *British Battles by Sea and Land*, gives a sensational description of the battlefield after the fight. The Jacobites were armed with a strange variety of weapons, including scythes and axes, and the ground presented a terrible spectacle, being strewn with legs, arms, hands, noses and mutilated bodies.

The account given by the Reverend Dr. Alexander Carlyle in his *Autobiography* published in 1861 gives some interesting details of the events immediately preceding and following the battle of Prestonpans. This writer, nicknamed 'Jupiter Carlyle,' was a friend of Sir Walter Scott, who described him as 'the grandest demigod I ever saw' and 'a shrewd, clever old carle' (Lockhart's *Life of Scott*). Born in 1722 at Prestonpans (where his father was the Presbyterian Minister), Alexander Carlyle was 23 at the time of the Jacobite rising and had recently taken his degree at Edinburgh University, when news arrived of the landing of Prince Charlie. Along with a number of his companions he enlisted in a volunteer corps formed in Edinburgh for the defence of the city, and he gives an interesting account of the state of public feeling there at a time when it seemed uncertain whether Sir John Cope or the prince would be the first to reach the capital. According to Carlyle's narrative, it would appear that many in the city, including the provost, had Jacobite leanings, while many others were doubtless keeping a prudent eye on current events and waiting to see 'which way the cat jumped.'

As has been said, Edinburgh fell into the prince's hands without a blow, the city volunteers having been hastily disbanded. Carlyle and his brother thereupon set out on foot for the paternal roof at Prestonpans, encountering on their way some of Hamilton's dragoons who had left Edinburgh to join Cope's army and were already in a condition bordering on panic. Hamilton's dragoons had marched out of Edinburgh to Coltbridge two days previous to the prince's entry, and encountering the Highland army on 16th September retreated precipitately towards

Haddington to join Cope's force, an episode on which scoffers bestowed the contemptuous title of 'the canter of Coltbridge.' The movements of both armies on 20th September, the day preceding the battle, are described by Carlyle, and he himself appears to have placed his intimate knowledge of the locality at the service of Sir John Cope. At the general's suggestion he kept a look-out during the afternoon and evening from the steeple of his father's church and reported his observations to the Commander. At nightfall he supped at the manse but found so many strangers being lodged there that he himself was constrained to obtain a bed in a neighbour's house. His narrative of the succeeding events is sufficiently graphic to deserve quotation verbatim, particularly as it will be seen to bear directly on our immediate subject :

(Op. cit. p. 141) 'I directed the maid to awake me the moment the battle began, and fell into a profound sleep in an instant. I had no need to be awaked, though the maid was punctual, for I heard the first cannon that was fired, and started to my clothes ; which, as I neither buckled nor gartered, were on in a moment, and immediately went to my father's, not a hundred yards off. All the strangers were gone, and my father had been up before daylight, and had resorted to the steeple. While I was conversing with my mother he returned to the house and assured me of what I had guessed before, that we were completely defeated. I ran into the garden where there was a mount in the south-east corner, from which one could see the fields almost to the verge of that part where the battle was fought. Even at that time, which could hardly be more than ten or fifteen minutes after firing the first cannon, the whole prospect was filled with runaways, and Highlanders pursuing them. Many had their coats turned as prisoners, but were still trying to reach the town in hopes of escaping. The pursuing Highlanders, when they could not overtake, fired at them, and I saw two fall in the glebe. . . . The crowd of wounded and dying now approached with all their followers, but their groans and agonies were nothing compared with the howlings, and cries,

and lamentations of the women, which suppressed manhood and created despondency. . . . In the meantime my father became very uneasy lest I should be ill-treated by the rebels, as they would discover that I had been a volunteer in Edinburgh ; he therefore ordered the horses to be saddled, and telling me that the sea was out, and that we could escape by the shore without being seen, we mounted, taking a short leave of my mother and the young ones, and took the way he had pointed out. We escaped without interruption till we came to Portseton harbour, a mile off, where we were obliged to turn up on the land, when my father observing a small party of Highlanders, who were pursuing two or three carts with baggage that were attempting to escape, and coming up with the foremost driver, who would not stop when called to, they shot him on the spot. This daunted my father, who turned immediately, and took the way we came. We were back again soon after, when, taking off my boots and putting on shoes, I had the appearance of a person who had not been abroad. I then proposed to go to Collector Cheap's house, where I understood there were twenty-three wounded officers, to offer my assistance to the surgeons, Cunningham and Trotter, the first of whom I knew. They were surgeons of the Dragoons, and had surrendered that they might attend the officers. When I went in, I told Cunningham (afterwards the most eminent surgeon in Dublin) that I had come to offer them my services, as, though no surgeon, I had better hands than a common servant. They were obliged to me ; but the only service I could do for them was to try and find one of their medicine-chests among the baggage, as they could do nothing for want of instruments. I readily undertook this task, provided they would furnish me with a guard. This they hoped they could do ; and knocking at the door of an inner room, a Highland officer appeared, whom they called Captain Stewart. He was good-looking, grave, and of polished manners. He answered that he would soon find a proper conductor for me, and despatched a servant with a message. In the meantime I observed a very handsome young officer

lying in an easy chair in a faint, and seemingly dying. They led me to a chest of drawers, where there lay a piece of his skull, about two fingers' breadth and an inch and a half long. I said, "This gentleman must die." "No," said Cunningham, "the brain is not affected, nor any vital part; he has youth and a fine constitution on his side; and could I but get my instruments, there would be no fear of him." This man was Captain Blake. Captain Stewart's messenger arrived with a fine, brisk, little, well-dressed Highlander, armed cap-a-pie with pistols, and dirk, and broadsword. Captain Stewart gave him his orders and we set off immediately.'

In the course of the search for the instruments Carlyle 'had an opportunity of seeing the victorious army. In general they were of low stature and dirty and of a contemptible appearance. The officers with whom I mixed were gentleman-like, and very civil to me, as I was on an errand of humanity.' The instruments, however, could not be found and Carlyle with his Highland companion returned to report their want of success. 'Before we got back to the Collector's house, the wounded officers were all dressed; Captain Blake's head was trepanned, and he was laid in bed, for they had got instruments from a surgeon who lived in the town, of whom I had told Cunningham.'

We now pass over a comparatively uneventful period of about a week, during which Carlyle paid a visit to Edinburgh to purchase necessaries for his proposed voyage to Holland, whither he was repairing in order to continue his education at Leyden University. During his sojourn in the city he encountered Prince Charlie and describes him thus: 'He was a good-looking man of about five feet ten inches; his hair was dark red, and his eyes black. His features were regular, his visage long, much sunburnt and freckled, and his countenance thoughtful and melancholy.' Carlyle closes his chapter dealing with the '45 as follows:

'I returned to Preston Pans on Thursday, and as I was to set out for Newcastle on Monday to take shipping for Holland, I sent to Captain Blake who was recovering well, to tell him that if he had any letters

for Berwick, I would take charge of them. He prayed me to call on him immediately. He said he was quite well, and complained of nothing but the pain of a little cut he had got on one of his fingers. He said he would trouble me with a letter to a friend at Berwick, and that it would be ready on Saturday at 4 o'clock, when he begged I would call on him. I went at the hour, and found him dressed and looking well, with a small table and a bottle and glasses before him. "What!" says I; "Captain Blake, are you allowed to drink wine?" "Yes," said he, "and as I expected you, I postponed my few glasses till I should drink to your good journey." To be sure we drank out the bottle of claret; and when I sent to enquire for him on Sunday, he said he had slept better than ever. I never saw this man more; but I heard he had sold out of the army and was married. In spring 1800, when the King [George III] was very ill and in danger, I observed in the papers that he had left a written message, mentioning the wounds he had received at the battle of Preston. On seeing this, I wrote to him as the only living witness who could attest the truth of his note left at St. James's. I had a letter from him dated the 1st of March that year, written in high spirits, and inviting me to Great George Street, Westminster, where he hoped we would uncork a bottle with more pleasure than we had done in 1745, but to come soon, for he was verging on eighty-one. He died this spring, 1802.'

By a piece of good fortune by no means too common in cases of the kind, the above-mentioned letter which Alexander Carlyle wrote to Captain Blake has been preserved, and is now in my possession. It is addressed to 'Capt. Blake, No. 20 Great George Street, Westminster,' and opens as follows:

' Inveresk,

' March 15th, 1801.

' Doctor Carlyle Minister of the Parish of Inveresk near Edin^{gh}. presents his comp^{ts}. to Cap^{tn}. Blake and begs leave to inform him that his card of enquiry about his Majesty's health which he saw in the newspapers

made him call to remembrance his knowledge of the Facts therein related concerning Cap^{tn}. Blake's wounds at the battle of Preston Pans.'

The writer then recounts the story of his meeting with Blake after the battle in substantially the same terms as in the *Autobiography*, and he concludes his letter: 'Dr. Carlyle at Inveresk near Edin^h. will be happy to learn by a note from Cap^{tn}. Blake if he can recollect any of those Circumstances. This is sent under cover to P. Heron, Esq^{re}. M.P, Albemarle St. who will gladly convey any note from Cap^{tn}. Blake to Dr. Carlyle.'

Altogether Robert Blake might well consider himself fortunate to have come through the experiences related above with no worse results. I am unable to say whether it was the captain or his wife who conceived the strange method of preserving the 'piece of his skull about two fingers' breadth and an inch and a half long,' but we may infer that the gallant captain was not a little proud of his honourable wounds from the fact of his having 'mentioned' them when calling to enquire for the king as related by Carlyle, and we may perhaps hazard the guess that it was he who caused the somewhat gruesome relic to be trimmed and mounted with a background of his hair in the form of a bracelet-clasp such as was worn with a black velvet band according to the fashion of that day. The miniature of the captain, signed by Andrew Benjamin Lens, is mounted in a precisely similar fashion and was evidently intended to form a pair with the other.

Another glimpse of Captain Blake is obtained by a perusal of the report of the enquiry which was held in September 1746 into the conduct of Sir J. Cope, Col. Lascelles and Brig.-Gen. Fowke in respect of the events of 1745. A cruel attack had been made upon the courage and competence of the commanding officers and in response to the popular outcry a special board of general officers was constituted to collect all available evidence from eye-witnesses as to the events of the early part of the campaign, with the result that the characters of all three commanders were fully vindicated. The report issued by the board declared that Sir John Cope 'did his duty as an officer both before and after the action, and his

personal behaviour was without reproach, and that the misfortune on the day of action was owing to the shameful behaviour of the private men and not to any misconduct or misbehaviour of Sir J. Cope or any of the officers under his command.' Among the officers who testified in their favour on several material points was Captain Blake of Murray's regiment. His evidence deals chiefly with the events previous to Prestonpans and with the disposition of Cope's forces before the actual battle. When questioned as to Col. Lascelles' handling of his men after the attack began, Blake gives his account of what he saw, but adds that 'he [the witness] being knocked down by the enemy soon after, he did not see Colonel Lascelles any more.'

Robert Blake appears to have thrown up his military career soon after the '45 in a moment of pique 'upon a younger officer being put over his head, who immediately joined the regiment in Flanders and was killed in the first action.' For this piece of information we are indebted to Captain Blake's daughter, concerning whom I propose to say a few words. Born in 1746, she was, I believe, one of three children, the other two being boys. The eldest son, Robert William, died in 1771; the younger, John, was alive in 1800 (the date of Captain Blake's will), but concerning him I can give no particulars. Two very charming miniatures in my possession represent, according to family tradition, the sons of Captain Blake and exhibit them as two comely lads of schoolboy age. Of the daughter, named, like her mother, Mary, there are also two miniatures taken at different periods of her life. In the earlier, she appears as a daintily dressed young lady, apparently in her teens; the later miniature is the picture of a woman of more mature age but still in the heyday of her beauty. In the light of these two most distinctly attractive portraits, it is a little surprising to find that it was not till she attained the age of 35 that Miss Mary Blake entered into the bonds of matrimony. Captain Blake and his family had sometime previously gone to reside in the Minster Yard at Peterborough, and it was the elderly dean of Peterborough, Dr. Charles Tarrant, who led Mary Blake to the altar of the cathedral on 7th August, 1781. The attractions of the bride were not merely external, for

Mary Tarrant must have been a person of considerable intellectual attainments. Her accomplishments, as we shall see, included a knowledge of Greek, Latin and Italian, and she had, in no ordinary degree, a talent for poetry and versification. It is probable, therefore, that these qualities of mind played no small part in directing the affections of the learned dean towards his fair neighbour, while, on her side, they doubtless enabled her to appreciate and enjoy the society of a man of scholarly culture and erudition, in spite of his being many years her senior. Her married life with the dean lasted but ten years, and not long after his death she followed the example of her late spouse (who was a widower at the time of his union with Mary Blake) by consoling herself with a second marriage. This time it was a handsome soldier who secured the hand of Captain Blake's daughter. Among the group of miniatures of which mention has already been made, is a portrait in uniform of Henry Ware, major in the 'Royal Regiment of Horse Guards Blue.' He was the son of the Rev. Henry Ware, D.D., prebendary of Tipperkevin in St. Patrick's cathedral, Dublin, and was born in 1768, being therefore 23 years younger than his bride. He was gazetted cornet in the Royal Horse Guards on 3rd October, 1786 and obtained his major's commission 24th October, 1799.

At first they seem to have had no settled home, for Henry Ware did not at once abandon soldiering, and his wife shared with him what she describes in a manuscript note in my possession as 'the wanderings and varieties of a military life at home and abroad.' In 1803, however, they settled at Ware Hill in the parish of Great Amwell, Herts. In the year 1809 was published a volume of 'Poems consisting of Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Italian, with some Originals. By Mrs. Ware, of Ware Hill, Herts.' It contains a preface couched in diffident language, whereby the writer hopes, as she says, to 'deprecate the blasts of severe criticism.' These 'Poetical attempts,' as the preface calls them, 'were written at different times and places—some to beguile hours of solitude—some to allay those of uncertainty.' The translations are from the writings of Homer, Theocritus, Moschus, Anacreon, Ovid, Horace, Ariosto, etc., and it may be noted with reference to the Greek and

Latin authors in this list that Mary Ware states in her preface that her 'knowledge of the dead languages has been acquired purely from private study, without instructor or assistant.' My chief aim, however, in here introducing Mary Ware's volume of poems is to draw attention to one of the 'Originals' therein, entitled 'To the Memory of a Beloved Father.' From a literary point of view it is not one of the writer's happiest efforts, but it provides what is undoubtedly the strongest evidence of the authenticity of the Blake relics with which I am dealing. I do not propose to inflict the whole poem on the meeting, but the portion dealing with her father's Prestonpan experiences deserves to be quoted, together with the series of footnotes appended:—

'In early youth, allur'd by martial fame,
 He felt its ardour, and pursu'd the flame;
 In battle firmly for his country stood,
 And gash'd, in Preston field, lay drenched in blood.
 'Twas there that Providence its power display'd—
 An arm unseen diverts the rebel blade—
 The tender texture of the brain defends—
 And thro' the folded sash the poniard bends.'

Footnotes: 'He was left for dead upon the field of battle with eleven wounds. It will be recollected that the rebels were chiefly armed with swords and dirks, and gave little quarter. He was Captain of grenadiers, and a very young man. A piece of his scull (*sic*) was cut off by a broad sword, close to the brain, which hung by the skin, and it is now in his daughter's possession. His sash was cut through and through by a blow aimed at his body. In the hurry occasioned by the sudden approach of the rebel army, it was tied round the waist, instead of being put over the shoulder, as was the manner of wearing it at that time, and by that change saved his life. His daughter has the sash.'

Among the papers in my possession is a memorandum written by her on a large double sheet of notepaper and addressed to her sister-in-law (and my great-great-aunt) Mrs. Crowther, formerly Anne Ware and sister of Major Ware. It is headed 'Contents of the blue linen bag in the first plate chest,' and continues: 'The Sash which my

Father wore in the battle of Preston Pans in the year 1745. The piece of skull which was cut from his head. His picture drawn in London, after he returned from Scotland in the year 1746. The likeness strong & the colours wonderfully fresh after 90 years.

My Picture and my late Husband's.

Mary Ware, 1836.'

The Wares ended their days at Ware Hill, and they are buried in Amwell churchyard, where their grave is marked by a table tomb bearing this inscription :

' Beneath are deposited ye remains of Henry Ware Esq. of Ware Hill House in this parish, late Major in ye Royal Regiment of Horse Guards Blue, where he served faithfully his King and Country for more than 20 years. He died Dec. 1, 1835 in ye 67th year of his age. Also of his beloved wife whose peculiar powers of mind highly cultivated were united with a benevolence that endeared her to those around her, and a fear of God that gave her peace in death. She died June 8, 1840 in ye 95th year of her age.'

They had no children, and on Mary Ware's death the house and some of its contents, including the Blake relics, miniatures and portraits, passed to Major Ware's sister Anne (who had married in 1804 the Rev. Samuel Crowther, vicar of Christ church, Newgate Street, and rector of St. Leonard's, Foster Lane, London, a clergyman of some note in his day) and eventually to myself as the great-great-nephew of Samuel Crowther.