

ART. XXIV. *Rosemary Dacre and the White Cockade, (an incident in the '45)* By ELLEN K. GOODWIN.

*Read at Ruthwell Manse, Dumfriesshire, July 24th, 1885.*

THE truth of the story of Rosemary Dacre and the white cockade having recently been questioned, the writer of this paper has collected all the available evidence, and hopes to shew that, notwithstanding some discrepancies, this pretty story of Scotch gallantry in 1745, is substantially true.

The incident as related by the heroine herself in a letter to the publishers of Blackwood's Magazine is as follows :

Sir. According to your request this morning I send you some account of the particulars that attended my birth, which I do with infinite pleasure as it reflects great honour on the Highlanders (to whom I feel the greatest gratitude) that at the time when their hearts were set on plunder, the fear of hurting a sick lady and child instantly stopped their intentions. The incident occurred Nov. 15, 1745; my father Mr. Dacre, then an officer of His Majesty's Militia was a prisoner in the Castle of Carlisle, at that time in the hands of Prince Charles. My mother (a daughter of Sir George le Fleming, Bart., Bishop of Carlisle) was living at Rose Castle six miles from Carlisle, when she was delivered of me; she had given orders that I should immediately be privately baptized by the Bishop's Chaplain (his Lordship not being at home)\* by the name of Rosemary Dacre. At that moment a company of Highlanders approached headed by a Captain Macdonald who having heard there was much plate and valuables in the Castle came to plunder it. Upon the approach of the Highlanders an old grey-headed servant ran out and intreated Captain Macdonald not to proceed, as any noise or alarm might cause the death of both lady and child; the Captain enquired when the lady had been confined? Within this hour the servant answered, Captain Macdonald stopped, the servant added, 'they are just going to christen

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\* The Bishop, who was aged 78, is described as a "timorous" man, and he appears to have left Rose Castle on the approach of the Highlanders, but he returned very shortly.

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the infant,' Macdonald taking off his cockade said 'let her be christened with this cockade in her cap, it will be her protection now and after if any of our stragglers should come this way: we will wait the ceremony in silence,' which they accordingly did, and they went into the coach-yard, and were regaled with beef, cheese, and ale, then went off without the smallest disturbance. My white cockade was safely preserved and shewn me from time to time, always reminding me to respect the Scotch, and Highlanders in particular. I think I have obeyed the injunction by spending my life in Scotland and also by hoping at last to die there.

Signed, \*ROSEMARY CLERK.

P.S. If the above anecdote can be of any interest to you, or the public, it is very much at your service. I have mentioned all the names of the persons concerned which you may relate or leave out as you think fit. Miss Law of Prince's Street, hearing of the above anecdote sent me a present of the Prince's picture and that of his lady the Princess Stalberg.

Edinburgh April 21, 1817.

A difficulty immediately arises with regard to the foregoing narrative, from the comparison of an entry in the register of the parish of Kirklington in Cumberland, to which my notice has been recently called; it runs as follows:

N.B. Mary daughter of Joseph Dacre, Esq., was baptized at Rose Castle, Nov. 3, 1745, as is certified by the Rev. Gust Thompson, Chaplain to the Right Rev. Sir Geo. Fleming, Bart., Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

There can be no mistake about the date of this entry, it is made in due chronological order, the preceding one being dated October 20, and that following November 9. Captain Joseph Dacre, the father of Rosemary (or Mary as she is called here) was squire of Kirklington, and owner of Kirklington Hall,† and therefore it was not unlikely that his child should be registered here: indeed it seems to have been a common practice with men in his position to enter the baptisms of children born away from home in the parish register.

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\* Rosemary Dacre, married Sir John Clerk of Penycuik.

† See *Church Bells of the Border*, by the Rev. H. Whitehead, Transactions: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, vol. vii. p. 224.

It would seem to be an easy solution of this difficulty about the date to assume Lady Clerk to have been wrong, and to assign her birth and the incident of the cockade to November 3rd, in accordance with the register ; but we are then confronted by another, namely, that on November 3rd no Highlanders had entered England at all ; they left Edinburgh and Dalkeith on that very day, and none of them crossed the border before the 7th or 8th of November.\*

There is another allusion to a christening at Rose, which took place during the month of December 1745 ; it occurs in a letter from Mr. Nicolson, of Hawkesdale Hall, at that time steward and confidential adviser to the Bishop, (and author, in conjunction with Dr. Burn, of the History and Antiquities of Cumberland and Westmorland) to Dr. Waugh, Prebendary and Chancellor of Carlisle.

We are much alarmed with account of an express which came from Kendal this morning at four o'clock to Mr. Armitage at Lowther, signifying that the rebels returned to Manchester on Monday night, sword in hand, got to Wiggan on Tuesday, entered Preston about 11 o'clock on Wednesday, and as supposed would be at Garstang that night and in Westmoreland this : . . . . . We had this day a christening at Rose, and my Lord added ' York' to the circle.†

This letter is undated, but by reference to the Chevalier de Johnsones‡ we find that the Highlanders reached Wigan, on their retreat northwards, on the 10th, and Preston on the 11th of December ; so that it must have been written on the 12th, and it proves that on that day they had a christening at Rose, and that the Bishop was present. No register of any baptism on this day has been found in the books of the neighbouring churches, and therefore assuming the correctness of the

\* See *An authentic account of the occupation of Carlisle in 1745*, by George Gill Mounsey, p. 41. London : Longman & Co., Carlisle : James Steel, 1846.

† *Ibid.*, p. 124.

‡ *Memoirs of the Rebellion in 1745 and 1746*. London, 1822, p. 83.

entry at Kirklington, I am inclined to think that this "christening" was the public reception into the church of the little lady who had been privately baptized by the chaplain on November 3rd. It seems to be usual in the north of England when a child is privately baptized to call the first ceremony the baptism and the second (reception into the Church) the christening; and though perhaps it is not a common custom nor a very orthodox one for a subsequent change to be made in the name, instances are known in which such a thing has been done, and therefore it is not impossible that the name of Rose was added to the baptismal name of Mary on this occasion, as Lady Clerk always signed herself Rosemary in one word. The concluding words of the letter "my Lord added 'York' to the circle" are somewhat puzzling: my impression is that they do not refer to the baby at all, but to Chancellor Waugh and his family, who had retired for safety to *York* and were living there at the time; Mr. Nicolson's letters contain frequent references to this fact. I think the meaning may be, that the Bishop had added the names of his friends at York to the family toasts on the occasion of the christening feast, but this is only a guess and must be taken for what it is worth. The cockade cannot have been presented on this second occasion, or Mr. Nicolson would certainly have mentioned something about it; the early part of his letter is full of the movements of the Highlanders, who (as we have seen) reached Preston on their northward march the day before the ceremony took place; and even had any stragglers visited Rose such an important fact would not have passed unnoticed.

If therefore it was not given at this time, nor on the 3rd of November (there being then no Highlanders in England), I think we cannot be wrong in assuming, that, whenever the incident may have happened, it certainly did not take place in connection with the baptism. Lady Clerk was 72 years old

old when she wrote down her story and therefore it should not be very surprising if we find that her memory cannot be trusted as to the accuracy of all details; the fact of Carlisle having surrendered on November 15th, may have impressed that date upon her mind.

There are two other accounts of the gift of the cockade. One is that given by Sir Walter Scott in a note to the Monastery; and, as he was acquainted with Sir John and Lady Clerk and visited at Penicuik as a boy, he probably had the story at first hand.

As gallantry of all times and nations has the same mode of thinking and acting, so it often expresses itself by the same symbols. In the civil war 1745-6, a party of Highlanders, under a chieftain of rank, came to Rose Castle the seat of the Bishop of Carlisle, but then occupied by the family of Squire Dacre of Cumberland. They demanded quarters, which of course were not to be refused to armed men of a strange attire and unknown language. But the domestic represented to the captain of the mountaineers, that the lady of the mansion had been just delivered of a daughter, and expressed his hope that under these circumstances, his party would give as little trouble as possible. 'God forbid' said the gallant chief, 'that I or mine should be the means of adding to a lady's inconvenience at such a time. May I request to see the infant?' The child was brought, and the Highlander taking his cockade out of his bonnet, and pinning it on the child's breast. 'That will be a token' he said, 'to any of our people who may come hither, that Donald M'Donald, of Kinloch Moidartt has taken the family of Rose Castle, under his protection.' The lady who received in infancy this gage of Highland protection, is now Mary, Lady Clerk of Pennycuik; and on the 10th of June, still wears the cockade which was pinned on her breast, with a white rose as a kindred decoration. *Monastery*, vol. i. note B. to Chap. ii.

The other account referred to is in a letter (dated January 14th, 1885,) from Mrs. Senhouse, of Netherhall, who says

My father's version of the story was this: that when the captain and his band arrived to plunder the Castle they found it almost deserted, everybody having fled in a panic and the infant was found in the cradle nearly alone with the nurse, and the cockade was then pinned

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on to its cap to protect it from other marauders. My father must have had the story from his father who was the infant's cousin.

These two versions of the story agree in one noticeable feature, namely, that neither of them mentions the baptism in connection with the gift of the cockade, and so far support what has been said above; but they differ in detail; one represents the helplessness and loneliness of the infant to have been the only appeal to the Highlander's heart, while the other (here in accordance with Lady Clerk's own narrative) represents an old servant as pleading the cause of mother and child. The latter seems to me to be the more probable; it is unlikely that a lady should be entirely deserted at such a time, and it is quite possible that the old servant, seeing a band of soldiers and fearing the worst, may have gone beyond the truth, and, like Caleb Balderstone, have drawn upon his imagination. The assertion that the baby was only just born and about to be baptized, may have been a fiction invented by him to save his mistress.

All the accounts agree that a band of Highlanders visited Rose Castle; but it is impossible, from the *data* at present available, and it is immaterial to the story, to say whether their visit took place before or after the surrender of Carlisle on November 15th. The latter seems the more probable, as we know from the memoirs of the Gilpin family that when Captain Gilpin who had a command at Carlisle during the siege, left that place after the capitulation, he found the country as far as Wigton overrun with Highlanders who were foraging for shoes and other necessaries.\* The identity of Captain Macdonald who is named as a leader of the party is also a matter of doubt. Sir Walter Scott is certainly wrong in making him out to be Donald McDonald of Kinloch Moidart; that officer was never in

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\* *The Gilpin Memoirs*, edited by W. Jackson, F.S.A., for this Society, pp. 69-72. In this account is an obvious mistake: the month being given as December instead of November, which the context shows it should be.

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England with the Highlanders; he was captured at Lesmahago and committed to Edinburgh Castle on November 12, 1745, from which he was transferred to Carlisle for trial. Nor is it probable that that Donald Macdonald of Tyendrish (major in Keppoch's Regiment) was the man; both he and his namesake of Kinloch Moidart were executed on Gallows Hill, Harraby, and their heads placed on the Scotch Gate, at Carlisle, where they remained for many years; had either of them protected the Bishop's daughter and grand-daughter, some influence would probably have been brought to bear to obtain for him decent burial or even a reprieve. The leader of the party who came in search of food and plunder must have been an obscurer man than either of these.\*

In conclusion a brief summary of facts and dates will give the version of the story which may be regarded as most probable. November 3rd, Rosemary Dacre was privately baptized at Rose Castle by the chaplain, as appears from the Kirkclinton register, the Bishop of Carlisle being away from home. On the same day, *i.e.* November 3rd, the Highlanders left Edinburgh and Dalkeith, on their way to Cumberland. They crossed the border on the 7th and 8th; and on the 9th a small party, well mounted, appeared at Stanwix, immediately opposite to Carlisle. Carlisle surrendered to Prince Charles Edward on November 15. Either between November 8, and 15, or more probably at a somewhat later date, a party of Highlanders visited Rose Castle, on which occasion the romantic incident connected with Rosemary Dacre took place; the captain of the band pinned the white cockade on the infant, and was probably informed, though falsely, that she had been

\* There was a third Donald Macdonald, against whom a true bill was found by the grand jury at Carlisle: he is described as "of the City guard," and was probably some old veteran, who had smelt powder on the Continent, and then joined the well-known Edinburgh City Guard. *Carlisle in 1745*, p. 258. No further proceedings against him are on record; he probably pleaded guilty, and ended his days in the plantations.

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recently born, and was just about to be baptized. On December 12th, the Bishop of Carlisle was again at home, and assisted at the christening, or reception into the church, of his grand-daughter who had been previously baptized.

The cockade, unfortunately, is lost: Sir George Clerk, the present baronet, tells me that Lady Clerk always wore it upon her birthday, but that when George IV. visited Edinburgh, she presented it to him, and it was believed to have passed into the possession of her present Majesty. This however, is not the case, and the little relic without doubt has perished.

