



## Cheshire and "The Fifteen"

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(Read 18th November, 1913)



ALTHOUGH the men of Cheshire, with a few exceptions, did not take an active part in the ill-conceived Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, the Stuart cause had many sympathisers in the county, and there is every reason to believe that a number of prominent gentlemen met at Ashley Hall at the time to decide upon their course of action. It is said that the voting on this occasion was equally divided, and that a casting vote in favour of the reigning monarch was given by the host, Thomas Assheton, constable of Chester Castle. At the present time, on the staircase hall at Tatton are ten full-length portraits, painted in 1720, of those who, according to tradition, were at the meeting. The pictures are said to have been painted to commemorate the fortunate decision, and were originally hung in the room in which the meeting was held.<sup>1</sup>

The most notable Cheshire man who actually joined the insurgents was William Massey, of Puddington, the story of whose flight from Preston, subsequent arrest at his home, and death in Chester Castle, is one of romantic interest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of this Society*, N.S., Vol. XV., p. 5, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Notes on the Old Halls of Wirral*, by W. F. Irvine, M.A., F.S.A., p. 24.

Had the Jacobites beaten the royal troops at Preston, advanced to Warrington, and captured Liverpool, in accordance with their plan of campaign, the tale to tell would have been different; but, as an army, they did not enter Cheshire, and the chief association of the event with the county palatine lies in the fact that a large number of the prisoners taken at Preston were brought to Chester and lodged in the Castle.

Previous to the action at Sheriffmuir, Mar despatched a force to the succour of the small band of Jacobites which the utmost efforts of the Earl of Derwentwater and Mr. Forster had been able to raise on this side of the Border, and which was in imminent peril of capture. The march of this relieving column stands out as a bold and spirited movement in a futile campaign. Starting from Perth, the greater part succeeded in crossing the Forth, in the face of a hostile fleet and army, and joined the English Jacobites at Kelso. The combined force, for reasons which then appeared sufficient, was placed under the command of a civilian, Forster, and marched southwards.

In a narrative of the happenings in Preston<sup>3</sup> it is recorded that on the report of the near approach of the rebels, "Expresses were despatched to the Lord Townsend, secretary of State, Laying before him the ill-posture of defence the Country was in, praying for assistance for Forces and Arms from Chester for the use of the Militia," and that "no answer came to the Express."

On the 11th November, the insurgents entered Preston, and then, menaced in front and rear by troops hurried from Chester and other towns, they prepared

<sup>3</sup> *Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society*, N.S., Vol. XXVIII., pp. 249, etc.

for what proved to be their final stand. On the 12th, King George's forces were allowed to cross the Ribble by the bridge, from which Forster had foolishly withdrawn the guard. They then enveloped the town, and assaulted it on the 13th, the day on which Sheriffmuir was fought. On the 14th, the capitulation of the Jacobites took place.

A writer, referring to the surrendered Jacobites, says :—

"Goaded by bayonet and halberd, the mass of their men were driven like a herd of cattle into the old church of Preston; where, on a cold and bitter day, they were stripped of their tartans and other clothing by the soldiers of the cavalry, so that many of them were glad to tear the green baize linings from the pews to cover their nakedness. When marched to Barnet, all those peers, gentlemen and privates were pinioned with cords like malefactors, and exposed to every indignity that a London mob could inflict."<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that the better class of the prisoners were marched to London, and that the common men were imprisoned in gaols in the neighbourhood of Preston, but this is not altogether correct, as at least one peer and several gentlemen were among the prisoners drafted to Chester Castle.

Naturally the progress of the rebellion would be watched with keen interest by the citizens of Chester, whose county lay adjacent to one in which stirring events were taking place, and, in the books of the Churchwardens of S. John's, there are records of payments made for "ringing for the news of the Rabballs being routed at Preston," and "ringing for the rabbles being beaten in Scotland." The date given, November 12th, is premature, seeing both actions took place on the following day. On January 19th another

<sup>4</sup> *British Battles on Land and Sea*, Vol. I., p. 552.

amount was "paid ringers for the news of the Pretender and Earl Mar leaving Perth." It is noticeable that the amounts dwindle from six to four shillings, and, in the last instance to three shillings, from which it may be conjectured that the interest of the citizens proportionately relaxed as the danger receded from their neighbourhood, or that the succession of desirable news became, to some extent, monotonous.

Nehemiah Griffith, of Rhual, near Mold, in his diary, records a visit to Chester on October 26th, on which occasion he found "the City Train'd Bands up." On November 12th, he records from his home that "at midnight this neighbourhood were affrighted with the discharge of Canon which proved to be at Liverpool for Gen. Wills's surrounding the Rebels in Preston in Lancashire." Two days later Griffith "went to Chester for news," and remarks that "at Evening the Express came of the Rebels surrender. . . . Ld. Cholmondeley<sup>5</sup> and company returned from Warrington. Rejoicings etc." A record of one of the "rejoicings" is contained in the Minutes of an Assembly of the Corporation, held on 22nd December, 1715:—

"The Treat lately made in the Pentice of this City for the Entertainm<sup>t</sup> of the Rt. Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Earl of Cholmondeley L<sup>d</sup> Liev<sup>t</sup> of this County & other p'sons of quality upon the Late Defeat of y<sup>e</sup> Rebels at Preston is approved & the charge thereof allowed by this House out of the Treasury of this City."<sup>6</sup>

On the 18th Griffith "went to Chester for further news," and finding a "Mr Benj<sup>n</sup>" going to Preston, he accompanied him, and appears to have been much

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Cholmondeley, created Lord Cholmondeley of Nantwich, 10th April, 1689, and Viscount Malpas and Earl of Cholmondeley, 27th December, 1706.

<sup>6</sup> Corporation MSS. *Assembly Book*.

interested in viewing the unfortunate captives. On his return journey he paid a visit to Liverpool to inspect the fortifications raised for the defence of the town.<sup>7</sup>

In the list of local historical events in Hemingway's *History of Chester*, under the date 1715, is the following note:—

"This winter lord Charles Murray (son to the duke of Athol), with several gentlemen, and a great number of private men, who had been taken (Nov. 13) in the rebellion at Preston, were brought prisoners to Chester Castle. The weather was very severe, and the snow lay a yard deep in the roads. Many of the above mentioned prisoners died in the castle by the severity of the season; many were carried off by a very malignant fever; and most of the survivors were transported to the plantations in America. As the Castle was quite filled with these prisoners, the Lent Assizes were held at Nantwich."<sup>8</sup>

On the 1st December, 1715, Elizabeth, Lady Otway, wrote from Chester to Mr. Benjamin Browne, of Troutbeck, and in her letter, evidently in connection with the rebellion, she expresses a hope that the hurry of his business as High Constable is over. She remarks that they have reason to be thankful that the repulse of the rebels was not at Chester, which was so well fortified that much more blood must have been spilt there than at Preston, and adds that many of the prisoners are gone to London, but that four hundred and fifty odd were brought to Chester Castle on Sunday night, and strict guard is kept upon them day and night.<sup>9</sup>

A further letter, dated fourteen days later, contains the statement that "all the prisoners lie upon the straw,

<sup>7</sup> *Proceedings of this Society*, N.S., Vol. XV., p. 43, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Vol. II., p. 244.

<sup>9</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., *MSS. of George Brown, Esq., of Troutbeck*, p. 352, reprinted in the *Cheshire Sheaf*, N.S., Vol. I., pp. 71 and 72.

the better and the worst alike, and that the King's allowance is a groat a day for each man for meat, but that they are almost starved for want of some covering, though many persons are charitable to the sick. Chester ought to be very thankful that it did not have the lot of Preston." Lady Otway intimated that she had sent "to provide a conveniency" eight miles out of the town, for the cannon was to have been planted at every gate, and her house would not have been secure, standing as it did in the mouth of the Northgate cannon.<sup>10</sup>

As the extract from the Corporation MSS. given below shews, the preparation of accommodation for the prisoners was the occasion, or perhaps excuse, for a rather serious breach between the civil and military authorities of the city. The former, represented by the Mayor, Sir Richard Grosvenor, who was also one of the Members for Chester; James Mainwaring, Alderman of Chester, and purchaser of the Bromborough Court estate; and Roger Comberbach, Recorder and late Town Clerk, were jealous of their jurisdiction, and consequently not over-anxious to make matters easy for the rival authority, Colonel Fane, who, in turn, was doubtless inclined to exaggerate the importance of his command, and to chafe at any limit being imposed upon it by civilians.

"At an Assembly held in the Inner Pentice upon the 22 December, 1715:—

A Petition or Representation to his Maty on  
Behalf of Roger Comberbach Esqu<sup>r</sup> Recorder  
of this City was read in the Words following  
viz<sup>t</sup>

To the King's most Excellent Maty  
The Humble Petition of yo<sup>r</sup> Matys most Dutiful  
and Loyal Subjects the Mayor and Citizens of the

<sup>10</sup> MSS. of *George Brown*, p. 352, etc.

City of Chester by their Cōmon Seal hereunto  
Affixed

Most Humbly Sheweth

THAT your Petitioners being most Desirous to preserve the Peace and Good Governm<sup>t</sup> of this City under yo<sup>r</sup> Matys happy Administration find themselves Obliged in most Humble manner to rep<sup>r</sup>sent to your Maty that on Thursday the Fifteenth day of this instant December Hugh Whishaw of the said City Gentleman made an Informacon or Complaint to S<sup>r</sup> Richard Grosvenor Bar<sup>t</sup> Mayor of the said City and one of your Maty's Justices of the peace for the County of Chester and Roger Comberbach Esqu<sup>r</sup> Recorder of the same City another of your Maty's Justices of the peace for the said County That Richard Brompton of the said City Gent<sup>l</sup> Storekeeper of your Maty's Castle of Chester was then by the Order of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Colonel Fane Commander of the Garrison here comitted a Prisoner to the Cōmon Guard in the said Castle for refusing to provide Coals and Candles for the Guards there which (as was then alledged) the said M<sup>r</sup> Brompton was no way Obliged to do nor was he subject to the Cōmand of the said Colonel in any such Respect. Whereupon the s<sup>d</sup> S<sup>r</sup> Richard and M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach sent a Civil Messuage to the said Colonel desiring he would please to take the Trouble to come down to the Pentice in the said City (where they then were) to Lett them know by what authority he had Imprisoned the said M<sup>r</sup> Brompton to which the said Colonel returned Answer that he was Engaged in Company so that he Could not Come and that he had Comitted the said M<sup>r</sup> Brompton to the Guard for not doing his Duty Whereupon the said S<sup>r</sup> Richard Grosvenor and M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach told the said M<sup>r</sup> Whishaw that they were not willing to Attempt any thing further for the said M<sup>r</sup> Brompton's Releif otherwise than by Letter to the Earl of Cholmondeley Governor of Chester but advised the said M<sup>r</sup> Whishaw to wait upon the said Colonel and Expostulate the matter with him and try if he could p<sup>r</sup>vail with the said Colonel to Discharge the said M<sup>r</sup> Brompton which was done accordingly

That the said Colonel conceiving some Resentment against the said S<sup>r</sup> Richard Grosvenor and M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach on Account of their said Message sent several times within Few Days afterwards to Inquire for the said M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach who was for the most part abroad or Employed in Publick Buisness

for yo<sup>r</sup> Maty's Service untill Monday last the Nineteenth day of this Instant December in the Evening when at the Colonel's Request the said M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach Attended him and being charged with the said Message sent by the said S<sup>r</sup> Richard Grosvenor and himself as af<sup>d</sup> and refusing immediately to acknowledge the said S<sup>r</sup> Richard Grosvenor and himself to be guilty of a Fault in what they had done the said Colonel declared he would make him the said M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach an Example to all the Mayors and Recorders in England And thereupon Comitted the said M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach a Prisoner to the Custody of Two Soldiers Comāding them to conduct him to his own house and there to secure him and place themselves as Centry at his Door and to take Care that he should not get out any Backway, And the s<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach was accordingly Conducted as a Prisoner thro' the Streets of the said City and Imprisoned and still remains a Prisoner in his own house with a Guard at his Door.

That by reason of the said Recorder's Imprisonm<sup>t</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> Petitioners have been already deprived of his Assistance at a Court of Tryalls held before the Sheriffs of the said City on Tuesday last the Twentyeth Instant and if he be not speedely Enlarged your Pet<sup>rs</sup> are likely to be deprived of their next Co<sup>r</sup>t of Quarter Sessions for the County of the said City and thereby of an Oppurtunity for their Mayor and other Officers to Qualify themselves according to Law by taking the Oaths of Fidelity to your Maty and Abjuration of the P<sup>r</sup>tender as they are most Willing to do but such Court of Quarter Sessions (according to our p<sup>r</sup>sent Constitution) cannot be holden here without the s<sup>d</sup> Recorder.

That the said Colonel designing further to Impose his Comānds upon our Magistrates in such manner as might conduce more to gratify his own Resentm<sup>ts</sup> than to your Maty's Real Service he the said Colonel did on the said last Tuesday send a Message to James Mainwaring Esqu<sup>r</sup> (another of yo<sup>r</sup> Matys Justices of the peace not only for the s<sup>d</sup> City but also for the said County of Chester) requiring the s<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Mainwaring to provide for Five Hundred Rebels Prisoners then upon the Road from Lancashire to this City to which when the said M<sup>r</sup> Mainwaring remonstrated the Impossibility of his making such Provision for that the City Gaol was already so full that it could not well Receive above Forty or Fifty of them but if the said Colonel pleased to send his Comissary he the said M<sup>r</sup> Mainwaring would assist



him in Contracting for voyd houses or other convenient places for the Reception of the s<sup>d</sup> Prisoners thereupon he the said Colonel by another Message to the said M<sup>r</sup> Mainwaring required him to provide for the said Rebel Prisoners and that he the said M<sup>r</sup> Mainwaring should be charged with them and none but he at his perill.

We are the more Concerned at these violent Proceedings of the said Colonel in these Instances because they have fallen upon these Two Gentlemen who in their several Capacetys of Justices of the peace and Deputy Liev<sup>ts</sup> and otherwise have upon all occasions distinguished themselves by a forward and Active zeal for yo<sup>r</sup> Maty's Service the said M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach being likewise one of your Maty's Justices of North Wales.

We begg leave further most Humbly to rep<sup>t</sup>sent these matters as Attempts of a Publick Nature and such as tend to Subject your Matys Civil Authority to the Abitrary Comānds of the Military Power and we have Reason to Fear may be Attended with very unhappy Consequences.

May It therefore please yo<sup>r</sup> most Excellent Maty upon Examinacon of the trueth of the p<sup>r</sup>misses to give such Order as yo<sup>r</sup> Maty in yo<sup>r</sup> great Wisdom shall think fitt not only for the s<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Comberbach's Enlargem<sup>t</sup> but likewise for Vindicating & Protecting the Magistrates of this Kingdom from the like Insults of the Military Power And yo<sup>r</sup> Pet<sup>rs</sup> as in Duty bound shall ever pray for yo<sup>r</sup> Maty's long Life & Prosperous Reign.

Upon reading whereof the same is approved by this house And It is ordered that the Comon Seal be Affixed thereunto and that M<sup>r</sup> Mayor be desired to write to S<sup>r</sup> Joseph Jekyll Chief Justice of Chester to give his Assistance in the prosecution thereof on Behalf of this City and that the same be sent up immediately by an Express and M<sup>r</sup> Peter Cottingham be Employed as a Sollicitor and that all Charges attending the s<sup>d</sup> matter be disbursed and paid out of the Treasury of the City."<sup>11</sup>

About a fortnight later, on the 6th January, 171<sup>5</sup>/<sub>6</sub>, at another Assembly, it is recorded that:—

"The Form of the Letters now read for my Lord Townshend and S<sup>r</sup> Joseph Jekyll is approved by this

<sup>11</sup> *Assembly Book.*

House and M<sup>r</sup> Mayor M<sup>r</sup> Recorder and the other Gentlemen who signed the Former Letters and affid<sup>ts</sup> are desired to sign these Letters and send up the same by the next Post." <sup>12</sup>

According to Pigot's *History of the City of Chester*, printed in 1815, <sup>13</sup> Colonel Fane was cashiered for the outrage upon Recorder Comberbach; and in the same work it is said that the latter was imprisoned in the Gate-house at the Castle, a statement which is not borne out by the Assembly Book.

Some five weeks after this another danger threatened the city, and caused the following letter to be urgently despatched :

"Chester 17th Febr'y 1715

Sr.

We are now mett in the Pentice at the Desire of M<sup>r</sup> Mayor and the Necessity of some Redress to a present Misfortune which Threatens this City—there are still about Five Hundred Rebel Prisoners in the Castle and many of them ill of a Spotted Fever the Contagion of which has infected some of the Soldiers of both Regiments here which stood Centry at the Castle and these Persons being Quartered in Severall Houses and Parts of the City We have a Melancholy Prospect of this Malignant Distemper getting to a Height and spreading among us. Colonel Vincent desires the Sick Soldiers may be together in a House to be Provided in some out part of the City That the Doctor may attend them and we find it necessary to provide accordingly as well in Pity and Convenience to those poor Men as to prevent the dreaded Consequence We are Earnestly to Recommend to your great Affection for this City a Speedy and proper Application whether to the Secretary at Warr or otherwise to Procure an Order for the Removal of the Rebel Prisoners from these parts for since they must be Disposed of, it will be a Mercy to this City to have it done immediately We need not mention the Approaching Assizes when the County Hall should be used and the Previous Time requisite for the Purgeing the Place But Leaving this Affair with you which has in

<sup>12</sup> *Assembly Book*.

<sup>13</sup> p. 263.

it a just Concern for his Majesty and the Welfare of this  
City We do with very much Respect Remain

S<sup>r</sup>

Yo<sup>r</sup> Affectionate  
Freinds and  
Humb<sup>ble</sup> Servants

W. Chetwode  
Note this Gentleman is ye chief  
physician in ye City of Chester.

Ri: Grosvenor Mayor  
Henry Bunbury  
John Williams  
W<sup>m</sup> Ince  
Edw Partington  
Edw<sup>d</sup> Puleston  
Ja<sup>s</sup> Mainwaring  
John Minshull  
John Thomason  
Francis Sayer

To Roger Comberbach  
Esq<sup>r</sup> At Toms Coffee House  
In Devereux Court  
London

Frank

Hen: Bunbury"

Seal: on a hexagonal shield, three garbs, a sword  
erect in chief [City of Chester].

Endorsed:—

"Certif. of a Contagious Feaver among ye Pris<sup>ners</sup> at Chester,  
17 Feb. 1715." <sup>14</sup>

Among the Stuart Papers at Windsor Castle <sup>15</sup> are  
a number of letters to the "Duke of Mar," having  
reference to the prisoners at Chester. In the earliest  
of these, one dated 28th February [-March 10th], 1716,  
the writer, Captain Harry Straton, expresses himself  
as follows:—

"Though I always hated rebellion, I cannot but pity the  
poor rebels that were taken at Preston, for by letters from

<sup>14</sup> The original letter is in the possession of Mr. H. B. Dutton.

<sup>15</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., *Calendar of the Stuart Papers preserved at Windsor Castle*, (1902-10), 4 Vols. These volumes deal with papers bearing dates from 1579 to 1717, which were formerly the property of the titular king, James III., otherwise the "Old Pretender," afterwards of his sons, and were eventually acquired by George IV. when Prince Regent.

Chester which I have seen, those that are not condemned are in a most miserable condition, being crowded like beasts in a fold, having a raging fever among them, and daily dying with ill usage and want of necessities, and little or no distinction made betwixt the best gentlemen and the meanest sort. . ."<sup>16</sup>

Lady Otway addressed another letter to her correspondent on March 8th, in which she tells him that there are among the prisoners in the Castle a Mr. Sandys, of Graythwaite, and his wife. He has had great charity, but it will in time fail. He says that his brother, who was once High Sheriff of Lancashire, is lately dead, and that he is heir to an estate worth eight or nine hundred pounds a year. He makes application to her by letter, but she does not know that he deserves her charity. His brother is said to have married one Swainson, and she desires information as to the truth of his story. He got out of the Castle, but was not fortunate enough to escape, and when caught he was put in irons in the Castle. Sweetum has begged his irons off, and gives relief to him and his wife. In a reply to this letter some information is given respecting Sandys.<sup>17</sup>

On the 3rd April, Mar wrote from Avignon to Lewis Inese, almoner to the titular king, and principal of the Scots College at Paris, recognising the sad plight of the captives, and regretting the inability to improve their condition. He says:—

"The accounts which Straton gives of those poor people in prison at Chester are lamentable, and the King justly thinks it would be a great charity to let them have some supply, but how this can be done, were there money, I know not."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. II., p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> *MSS. of George Brown, Esq., of Troutbeck*, p. 352, reprinted in *Cheshire Sheaf*, N.S., I., p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. II., p. 57.

About this time a printed narrative of some of the experiences of the prisoners was issued. It was dated Chester Castle, 28th April, 1716, and a copy of it was sent to Mar in a letter from Sir Hugh Paterson, of Bannockburn, dated from Leyden, on the 23rd June. Paterson writes:—

"I send you the enclosed paper being a part of that which is called 'Roben's Last Shift, or How the Shift Sifted,' in which you will see a very odd letter from Chester Castle."

The narrative is as follows:—

"On Thursday we were all taken out of our apartments before the Sheriff, the officer of the Guard, and Sir Thomas Johnston's son-in-law (who, they say, have bought us from the King) and were all offered indentures to sign for 7 years' service in the plantations, as the said Sir Thomas should please to dispose of us. They have prevailed with a great many of the common sort to sign them, the last of whom were carried off to Liverpool this morning. But the gentlemen unanimously refused to do the same, alleging we were no ways bound thereto by the nature of our petition presented to his Majesty, but only to simple transportation, which we were willing to undergo at his Majesty's desire, whereupon we were severely threatened, and, without getting liberty to return to our rooms for our bedclothes and linen, we were all turned into a dungeon or little better, and fed only with bread and water."<sup>19</sup>

Evidently, the prisoners occupied far more space in the Castle than the usual quarters allotted to such visitors, and no doubt there were degrees of comfort, or the lack of it, in the accommodation provided. From the qualification used in connection with the above description of the dungeon into which the gentlemen were thrown, it is improbable that it was the one which formed part of the terrible gaol so graphically described by Pennant in 1777, although that was in all likelihood occupied by some of the rebel prisoners. Pennant says that the day confinement

<sup>19</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. II., p. 232.

of prisoners

"is in a little yard, surrounded on all sides by lofty buildings, impervious to the air, excepting from above, and even unvisited by the purifying rays of the sun. Their nocturnal apartments are in cells seven feet and a half by three and a half, ranged on one side of a subterraneous dungeon, in each of which are often lodged three or four persons. The whole is rendered more (wholesomely) horrible by being pitched over three or four times in the year. The scanty air of their straight prison-yard is to travel through three passages to arrive at them, through the window of an adjacent room; through a grate in the floor of the said room into the dungeon; and finally, from the dungeon, through a little grate above the door of each of their kennels . . . Mr. Howard compares the place to the Black-hole of Calcutta. The view I had of it assisted to raise the idea of a much worse prison; where

'No light, but rather darkness visible,  
Served only to discover sights of woe.'"<sup>20</sup>

One of the prisoners confined in Liverpool, in a letter, dated the 13th May, to his father, Thomas Rutherford, mentions that:—

"There came from Chester here yesterday a hundred and four prisoners amongst whom were Cousin James, John Brown, Ninian Brown, and severall other gentlemen."<sup>21</sup>

Another letter from the same, dated two days later, contains the following:—

"That account from Chester of the prisoners (which you mention in your day's letter) livving upon bread and water lasted only for two or three days, for there was no such order from the Government, and was onlie doon by Sir Thomas Johnston's doers here to oblige them to sign Indentors."

Dr. Bridge, the writer of the article in which this note appears, explains that the indentures to which reference is made, bound the prisoners to go to the plantations, and, at the rate of £25 per head, Sir Thomas Johnston was finding it a profitable piece of business. On the 17th May a third letter to Thomas

<sup>20</sup> Hemingway's *History of Chester*, Vol. II., p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> *Proceedings of this Society*, N.S., Vol. XV., p. 51, etc.

Rutherford, from another correspondent, mentions that several prisoners had been stopped in Chester for trial; presumably because they would not sign the indentures, or could not raise the amount demanded by Johnston.

The next item relating to the prisoners is in a fourth letter from Lady Otway to Mr. Browne, dated 5th July, in which she mentions:—

"There are still some hundreds of prisoners in the Castle, and two regiments of soldiers in the town, all provisions are therefore dear."<sup>23</sup>

The prisoners do not appear to have been very securely guarded, and, in a letter, dated October 8th [-19th], from Colonel Harry Bruce of Clackmannan, to the Duke of Mar, is a note that:—

"The English letters that came here this morning bear that thirteen of our prisoners have escaped out of Chester Castle . . . but their names are not yet known . . ."<sup>24</sup>

Further escapes, possibly from some other gaol, are described in letters written at the end of October by a Lewis Charteris. It seems that he and many others were being conveyed to the West Indies to serve there as slaves, and, on the way, they rose, captured the ship, and navigated her to France. Charteris dilates on the difficulties he experienced with his fellow conspirators and others, and continues:—

"At last I prevailed on the sailors by the interest of Mr. Murray,<sup>25</sup> son of a parson in Cheshire, who had great interest in them, to propose to carry home the ship, and arrest her for their wages."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> MSS. of George Brown, Esq., of Troutbeck, p. 352.

<sup>24</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. III., p. 99.

<sup>25</sup> Possibly a relation of the Rev. Peter Morrey, Rector of Thurstaston and Vicar of Neston. See *Wirral Notes and Queries*, Vol. II., pp. 7 and 78. Will proved Chester in 1720. Letters of administration of a Peter Morrey, clerk, curate of Holy Trinity, Chester, were granted at Chester in 1724.

<sup>26</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. III., p. 200.

Among the many appeals made to Mar is one, dated from St. Germain's on 7th December, in the same year, in which the writer, Thomas Scott, says:—

"I am a son of the Earl of Tarras, was taken at Preston, and escaped from Chester. Being a relation of your Grace's first lady by my mother, I beg your protection and orders, and allowance to come to kiss your hands."<sup>27</sup>

France was naturally the chief goal of the Jacobite refugees, and the arrival of these impoverished people must have been a sore tax upon French hospitality, and a source of embarrassment to the exiled Stuart, by whom their reshipment to their native land, as referred to below, would be hailed with relief. In a letter from Bordeaux, dated 4th January, 1717, Robert Gordon, writes to Mar:—

"I am told that one Murray and one Sword of Mr Charteris's troop were parted for Avignon before I got your orders concerning them, though I had caused clear them out, and they told me they were going for Flanders. I hope to get all the common people shipped off for Scotland."<sup>28</sup>

On January 11th, Charteris wrote to Major Simon Fraser from Bordeaux, in these terms:—

"I had to do with the basest pack ever poor man was trysted with. . . . I should think it hard to have to answer to the accusations and impertinencies of these scoundrels, whom I have redeemed from slavery. They are Sword, the landward tailor, our old corporal, you know him to be a coward, and I can assure you he's an arrant scoundrel in many other respects; Murray, the sheep stealer, is worse if possible, and Henderson the brewer's man is worst of all. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

The majority of the refugees were no doubt, in happier days, good and useful citizens, but their ranks contained many undesirable characters, and it seems probable that the son of the Cheshire parson was of that number, notwithstanding the better opinion Charteris appears to have once entertained of him.

<sup>27</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. III., p. 296.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. III., p. 398.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. III., p. 425.



Two more extracts which, perhaps, are only indirectly connected with "The Fifteen," bring the series of notes from the Stuart Papers to a close.

On March 10th, 1717, George Jerningham, agent in Holland to James III., addressed a letter from "Gand" to Mar, complaining that Mr. Dicconson<sup>30</sup> had neglected the business of two Jacobites, Mr. Tilesly and Mr. Thomas Ashton, the last a gentleman of fortune and interest in Cheshire and well known to the Duke of Ormonde. They had come over for instructions, and he desired that these might be sent him as soon as possible.<sup>31</sup> Mr. Thomas Assheton has already been mentioned as giving a casting vote in favour of George I.

The last extract is dated Calais, 3rd July, 1717, and was written by Father Archangel Græme, the capuchin, to Mar. He says:—

"Mr Chumley of Hordford<sup>32</sup> is a cadet of Lord Cholmondeley's family. As he is a man of considerable fortune, and very loyal, I thought you had known him. He was concerned in the Oxford business,<sup>33</sup> and was forced to give 6,000*l.* bail to have the benefit of the *Habeas Corpus* Act. He came here, as far as I understand, only to divert himself, yet I received two or three visits from him during his short stay here, and he expressed himself with all the tenderness imaginable on the subject of his master. Perhaps you know as little of the two gentlemen mentioned in my last. Sir Thomas Sebright<sup>34</sup> is an M.P. for Cheshire, and worth a great deal of money. . . ."

<sup>30</sup> William Dicconson or Dickenson held various posts under James II. and other members of his family.

<sup>31</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. IV., p. 114.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Cholmondeley of Holford, high sheriff of Cheshire in 1687, was then about 65 years old. He was one of those present at the meeting at Ashley Hall.

<sup>33</sup> Speaking about the small amount of active support given to the Jacobite rising in England, Green, in his *Short History of the English People* [p. 1586], says:—"Oxford alone, where the University was a hotbed of Jacobitism, shewed itself restless."

<sup>34</sup> Sir Thomas Saunders Sebright, fourth baronet, LL.D., is said to have represented the county of Hereford in Parliament, and the above statement that he was member for Cheshire would appear to be inaccurate.

<sup>35</sup> *Calendar of the Stuart Papers*, Vol. IV., p. 422.