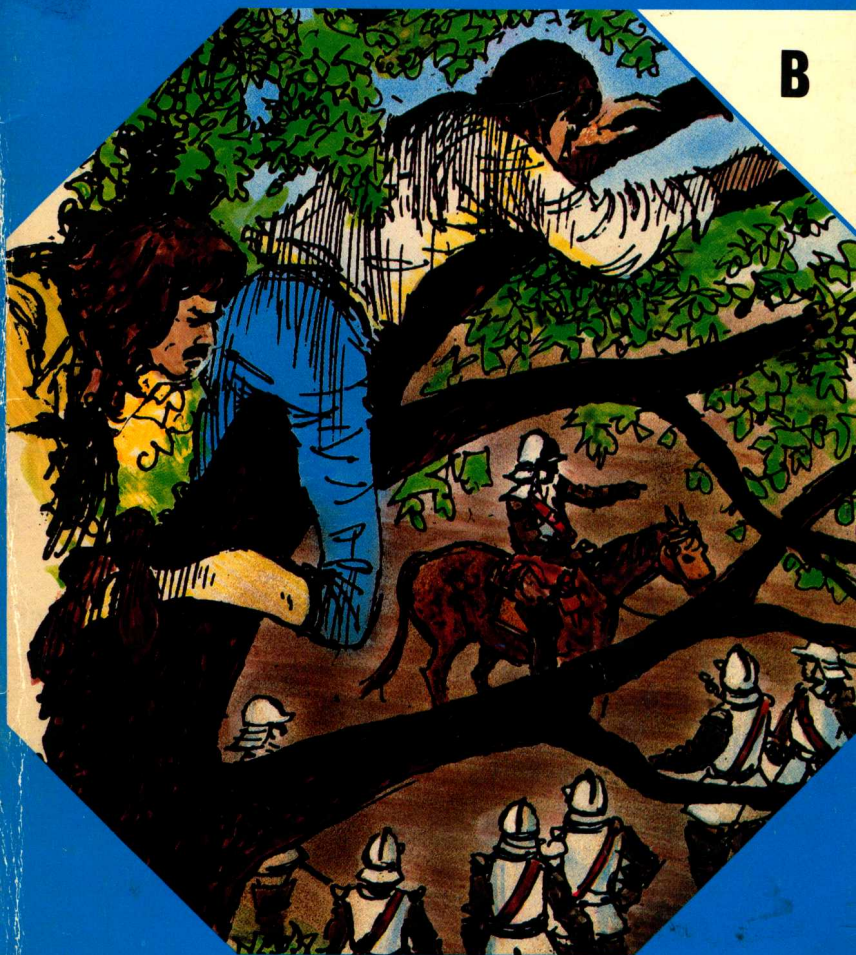


HODDER
GRADED
READERS

THE ESCAPE OF KING CHARLES

Peter Webb

B



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HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON SYDNEY AUCKLAND TORONTO

Hodder Graded Readers
General Editor: E. Frank Candlin

The Escape of King Charles—Grade B Lower
Intermediate
Illustrated by Douglas Phillips

ISBN 0 340 22540 8

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Preface

The first consideration in planning this collection of graded Readers has been—readability. If students are to be encouraged to widen their command of the language by extensive silent reading, then they must enjoy what they are invited to read. Because the age, interests and cultural background of students differ so widely, the range of topics of these Readers covers a broad field.

Structural grading in the successive stages has been controlled, though not rigidly, so that the Readers can be used in conjunction with any of the standard English courses. Lexical grading and the density of new words have also received careful attention, but the overall aim has been that general widening of a command of the language on which all more active communicative skills so much depend.

It is hoped that teachers will find the Readers useful for consolidating work done in class and that students will read them with interest and enjoyment.

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1. The Battle of Worcester

King Charles stood on the tall tower of Worcester Church. From the tower, the King could see and hear the noise of battle. Buildings were burning all over Worcester town. Charles looked down. Men were running from house to house. He could hear the shouts of soldiers who were hurt. Horses were lying in the road. Then Lord Wilmot came up the stairs and spoke to Charles.

"Don't stay here, sir," he said. "The church is already burning. Come away with us now. You still have a chance to escape. If you stay here for another ten minutes you will have no chance. We cannot win the battle now. The Roundheads have too many soldiers. Look over there, sir. More Roundhead soldiers are coming down the hill from London."

"I cannot leave my soldiers now," said Charles.

"Sir, you can do nothing more for them," said Lord Wilmot. "Your Scottish soldiers are already riding back to Scotland. Your English soldiers are too tired to fight any more. If you stay here, more of your soldiers will be hurt. If you leave now, the battle will stop."

King Charles looked over the town once more and then said,

"I'll come with you now. But where can we go? I can see Roundhead soldiers on every road. How can we escape from them now?"

"Lord Derby and his son are downstairs," said Lord Wilmot. "Last night they stayed with a man called Penderel at his farm, *Whiteladies*. Lord Derby says we can stay there. We needn't go on the roads. We can go across the fields. If we hurry, we can arrive there tonight."

King Charles and Lord Wilmot hurried downstairs. Then with Lord Derby and his son they set off for *Whiteladies*.

2. Whiteladies

It was three o'clock in the morning. The four men were still riding quickly along the road, but they were very tired.

"Ah, I can see *Whiteladies* now," said Lord Derby. "There it is at the bottom of the hill. It's the house behind the big wall. Richard and William Penderel will help us, I'm sure."

The men rode up to the house. The horses' feet made a lot of noise on the road. At once a bedroom window opened. A man put his head out of the window and shouted.

"Who's there?"

"Lord Derby with three friends. We've just come from Worcester. We fought all day yesterday, but we did not win the battle. Now Cromwell's soldiers are everywhere and we need your help."

"Wait a minute. My brother will let you in," said Richard Penderel.

William Penderel opened the door.

"Come in quickly. The woods are full of Roundheads. You rode very near them. Perhaps they heard you. Don't leave your horses outside. The Roundheads will see them. Then they will know you are here."

So they brought the horses inside, too.

Then the two brothers saw Charles. At once they knew that he was the King.

Richard spoke quietly to Charles.

"Sir," he said. "Tomorrow your friends can hide in the forest. Then we'll take them to other houses. They'll be safe because no one knows them. But everyone in England knows you, sir. They have pictures of you; or they've seen you in London, or met you travelling."

"You're right," said the King. "But don't worry. I can change. In ten minutes no one will know me. Can

you get me some really old clothes? And some shoes, please.”

Charles went into the next room; he began to take off his fine clothes.

“Come in here, Wilmot,” he called. “Are you any good at cutting hair?”

Soon the other men heard Charles and Lord Wilmot laughing in the next room. When the King came back everyone laughed too. Charles was wearing a black coat; it was much too small for him. His shirt was very old. His trousers had holes in the knees. His hair was very short and untidy. On his head was a dirty old grey hat.

“That’s very good, sir,” said Richard. “But you’ve forgotten your face and hands. They are still very clean and white.”

Charles walked over to the fire. He put his hands in the chimney and then touched his face. His hands and face were soon very dirty.

“That’s much better,” said Richard. “No one will know you now. But it’s time to leave. It’ll soon be day. I’m going to show Lord Wilmot and his friends the way to a safe house. My brother will take you to a secret place in the forest. Only my brother and I know where it is. You can stay there safely all day. Here, William, take this coat for the King. It’s still very cold outside.”

William took Charles to the secret place in the forest. He left him sitting under a big tree.

“How quiet it is here,” thought Charles. “It’s very different from being with my army: the noise of the guns, the horses and the men; and the shouts of battle. Now I am alone. I have time to think about my future.”

Soon it began to rain; and the rain dropped from the leaves. So Charles put the coat over his head. This kept him dry.

“I can fight no more battles. Cromwell’s armies are too strong. And I’ll never get another army. I can do nothing more in England or in Scotland. I can go to France. I still have friends there. But first I must get to the sea. Then I’ll need a boat, but that will not be easy . . .”

It rained and rained. The rain began to come through



the coat. Charles was cold and miserable. So he was very pleased when he saw William coming back.

"We can go back to the house now, sir," said William. "The Roundheads didn't like the rain. My wife has some hot dinner ready at home."

"That's the best news I've heard this week," said Charles with a smile.

"I'm not surprised," said William. "You've been here for twelve hours."

The two men walked quickly back to *Whiteladies*. William told the King about the morning:

"The Roundheads arrived before breakfast. They looked everywhere in the house and the garden. In all the cupboards, under the beds, even up the chimney. They pulled up the floor, and looked in the roof. They found nothing. Then they were very angry. They asked lots of questions. But we didn't tell them anything. We only said



that we heard horses passing in the night. The Roundheads were angry with us, but they could do nothing more. So they went away. Tonight, you can rest quietly in our house, sir."

"Thank you, but no," said Charles. "I cannot stay here. I want to leave tonight. I still have a good chance to escape. The Roundheads will think I'm going to the South Coast. They will be looking for me on all the roads to London. But I've decided to go to the West Coast. There are not so many soldiers there and I can get a ship more easily. I'm going to go through Wales. I've got friends there and I can stay in their houses. Only one thing will be difficult; I don't know the roads from here to Wales. Can you help me?"

"Yes," said William. "My brother Richard sometimes goes to Wales. He knows the best roads. When we get home, he can tell you about them."

3. The Bridge

King Charles sat by the fire with the two brothers, William and Richard Penderel. Sarah Penderel brought in some more wine and put it on the table. Richard was talking quietly to Charles.

"It will be best to go through the woods. I know the roads very well. I usually cross into Wales by a little bridge across the river. That will be the only difficult place, because in front of the bridge there is a large farmhouse. The people who live in the farmhouse are Roundheads. If they hear us they will stop us."

"We'll be very careful," said Charles. "They won't hear us."

Sarah Penderel looked worried. She walked to the door and opened it.

"Listen to that wind," she said. "And it's so dark and wet. It's not a good night for you to go through the forest, sir. Can't you stay here with us for just one more night?"

"You have all been very good to me," said the King.

"But I can't stay any longer. If the Roundheads find me here they will put you in prison; and they will burn your house. I know tonight is not a very nice night. But it gives me a better chance to escape. The wind makes a lot of noise in the trees. It's raining and the night is dark. So it will be very difficult for the Roundheads to hear us or to see us in the woods."

Charles turned to William. "What's the time? Can we leave now?"

"It's ten o'clock," said William. "We can start in half an hour."

Three hours later, it was still raining. The strong wind was blowing dark clouds across the sky. The three men were hurrying through the woods. But now the King was walking behind William and Richard. He began to walk slower and slower. Then he stopped and sat on the ground.

"What is it, sir?" asked William. "Have you hurt your leg?"

"No," said Charles. "It's these old shoes. They are much too small. They are cutting into my feet."

Charles took his shoe off and held it up. "Look. This one has a big hole in it. And so has the other one. My shoes are full of little stones. My feet are hurting so much. I really can't walk very quickly."

"We can have a short rest here," said Richard. "We have done well. We are nearly in Wales. You can already hear the river. Look. Can you see the house with a white gate, at the bottom of the hill? The bridge is just behind the house. When we've crossed the bridge, we'll be in Wales."

Charles put on his shoes and stood up.

"If we're so near Wales," he said, "I don't need a rest. I can sleep at my friend's house in another two hours."

The three men walked slowly down to the white gate. Richard went through the gate first. Then William held the gate open for the King. But suddenly the wind blew very strongly. William couldn't hold the gate open; and it made a lot of noise when it shut. At once a dog began to bark in the farmhouse. Then a man shouted from the window. Richard was already on the bridge.

"Go back!" he shouted. "They've heard us!"

But it was too late. Already there were lights at the windows. Charles and William could hear a lot of noise in the house. Three men were running towards Richard on the bridge. Some dogs were running with them and barking.

"Why doesn't Richard run?" asked Charles.

"Richard wants the men to see him and run after *him*," said William. "He knows that they can't see us in the dark. Come on. If we are quick we can escape into the woods."

Charles forgot that his feet were hurting. He ran back up the hill, into the woods, with William. Then they lay down and rested on the wet ground. The men were shouting and the dogs were still barking across the river.

"Do you think Richard will escape?" asked Charles.

“I don’t know,” said William. “There are a lot of men and dogs looking for him. But Richard still has a good chance to escape. He is very clever. He can move very



quickly in the woods at night. Those other men have just got out of bed in their night clothes. They'll soon get tired."

"I hope so," said Charles. "But what can we do now? We can't cross the river tonight. And if we stay here they'll find us in the morning."

"It won't be light until six o'clock. If we hurry we can arrive at *Whiteladies* while it is still dark," said William.

Charles was tired and miserable; but he laughed quietly.

"My feet can't hurry anywhere," he said. "But I'll do my best."

"Let me look at those shoes, sir," said William.

Charles gave his shoes to William. William took an old letter from his coat and then put it in the shoe.

"Try that, sir," he said. "Now the stones can't cut your feet."

Together the two men hurried through the woods. They were tired and miserable. William was worried about his brother, Richard.

"If the men catch Richard," he thought, "they'll tell the soldiers. Then the soldiers will ride quickly to *Whiteladies*. Perhaps the soldiers will already be at *Whiteladies* when we arrive. And what is happening to my wife?"

Charles was miserable too.

"One week ago," he thought, "I was a king, riding on a fine horse with an army. I had lots of friends, good food and warm clothes. Now I am just a miserable man who is trying to escape."

But the two men did not speak. They did not say what they were thinking. They helped each other through the woods. They tried to be quick but it was already light when they arrived at the last hill. Charles looked down the hill and said:

"Ah, at last. There is *Whiteladies*. It's been a long night. Ten more minutes, and then I can take off these shoes. I'll sleep all day."

But William was looking carefully at the house. He was very worried. He put his hand on Charles' shoulder and said: