

# HOW THEY HELD THE BASS FOR KING

## JAMES--1691-1693

In the chapter "How They Held the Bass for King James" from the tale recounted in 1743, the narrative unfolds a stirring historical saga set during the years 1691-1693, depicting the valorous feat of a small group of cavaliers who daringly defended the Bass Rock against the forces opposed to King James. The Bass, a formidable natural fortress surrounded by the tempestuous seas near North Berwick Law, had previously been a grim prison for those dedicated to the Covenant, where they endured their confinement with a mix of prayer, psalmody, and defiance.

The focus shifts to the exploits of Halyburton, Middleton, Roy, and young Dunbar, who were initially imprisoned within the Bass's stark confines, destined to meet their demise there. Their situation took a dramatic turn when they, comprising merely four souls against a garrison, ingeniously commandeered the fortress, thus declaring it a bastion for King James. This audacious act was not achieved through spiritual means or by the force of faith alone but through a shrewd plan executed when most of the garrison was distracted elsewhere.

They secured their freedom by overpowering the few soldiers remained on the rock, signaling their triumph over the Bass Rock to the enemies below, and effectively making the formidable fortress a stronghold for their cause. Their success prompted support from King James, who sent reinforcements, thus emboldening the cavaliers to not only defend their position but also to levy tolls on passing ships, further fueling their resistance efforts.

Their dominion over the Bass was challenged when forces sent by Wullie Wanbeard attempted to recapture it through siege and assault. Yet, after two days of fierce

confrontation, the attackers withdrew, battered and bested, allowing the cavaliers to continue their relentless, piratical forays for three more years. Alas, the siege inevitably took its toll; cut off and starved, the cavaliers ultimately surrendered under a flag of truce.

The dramatic surrender was met with a peculiar mix of hospitality and strategy; Middleton, in a final act of defiance or perhaps diplomacy, treated the emissaries with unexpected generosity. The narrative, rich with historical references and vivid imagery of the rugged Scottish landscape and its indomitable inhabitants, evokes the fierce loyalty and audacious spirit of those who held the Bass for King James, portraying their saga not just as a mere footnote in history but as a legendary embodiment of courage and resilience.