

the same hospitality to your kinsman of A—that it gave to this same Sir William Ashton.”

“Sir William took the castle by storm,” said Ravenswood, “and, like many a victor, had little reason to congratulate himself on his conquest.”

“Well, well!” said Lord A—, whose dignity was something relaxed by the wine he had drunk,—“I see I must bribe you to harbor me—Come, pledge me in a bumper health to the last young lady that slept at Wolf’s Crag, and liked her quarters. My bones are not so tender as hers, and I am resolved to occupy her apartment to-night, that I may judge how hard the couch is that love can soften.”

“Your lordship may choose what penance you please,” said Ravenswood; “but I assure you, I should expect my old servant to hang himself, or throw himself from the battlements, should your lordship visit him so unexpectedly—I do assure you, we are totally and literally unprovided.”

But his declaration only brought from his noble patron an assurance of his own total indifference as to every species of accommodation, and his determination to see the tower of Wolf’s Crag. His ancestor, he said, had been feasted there, when he went forward with the then Lord Ravenswood to the fatal battle of Flodden, in which they both fell. Thus hard pressed the Master offered to ride forward to get matters put in such preparation as time and circumstances admitted; but the Marquis protested his kinsman must afford him his company, and would only consent that an avant-courier should carry to the destined seneschal, Caleb Balderston, the unexpected news of this invasion.

The Master of Ravenswood soon after accompanied the Marquis in his carriage, as the latter had proposed; and when they became better acquainted in the progress of the journey, his noble relation explained the very liberal views which he entertained for his relation’s preferment, in case of the success of his own political schemes. They related to a secret, and highly important commission beyond sea, which could only be intrusted to a person of rank, and talent, and perfect confidence, and which, as it required great trust and reliance on the envoy employed, could not but prove both honorable and advantageous to him. We need not enter into the nature and purpose of this commission farther than to acquaint our readers that the charge was in prospect highly acceptable to the Master of Ravenswood, who hailed with pleasure the hope of emerging from his present state of indigence and inaction, into independence and honorable exertion. While he listened thus eagerly to the details with which the Marquis now thought it necessary to intrust him, the messenger who had been despatched to the tower of Wolf’s Crag, returned with Caleb Balderston’s humble duty, and an assurance that “a” should be in seemly order, sic as the hurry of time permitted, to receive their lordships as it behoved.”

Ravenswood was too well accustomed to his

seneschal’s mode of acting and speaking, to hope much from this confident assurance. He knew that Caleb acted upon the principle of the Spanish generals, in the campaign of —, who, much to the perplexity of the Prince of Orange, their commander-in-chief, used to report their troops as full in number, and possessed of all necessary points of equipment, not considering it consistent with their dignity, or the honor of Spain, to confess any deficiency either in men or munition, until the want of both was unavoidably discovered in the day of battle. Accordingly, Ravenswood thought it necessary to give the Marquis some hint, that the fair assurance which they had just received from Caleb, did not by any means insure them against a very indifferent reception.

“You do yourself injustice, Master,” said the Marquis, “or you wish to surprise me agreeably. From this window I see a great light in the direction where, if I remember aright, Wolf’s Crag lies; and, to judge from the splendor which the old Tower sheds around it, the preparations for our reception must be of no ordinary description. I remember your father putting the same deception on me, when we went to the Tower for a few days’ hawking, about twenty years since, and yet we spent our time as jollily at Wolf’s Crag, as we could have done at my own hunting seat at B—.”

“Your lordship, I fear, will experience that the faculty of the present proprietor to entertain his friends is greatly abridged,” said Ravenswood; “the will, I need hardly say, remains the same. But I am as much at a loss as your lordship to account for so strong and brilliant a light as is now above Wolf’s Crag,—the windows of the Tower are few and narrow, and those of the lower story are hidden from us by the walls of the court. I cannot conceive that any illumination of an ordinary nature could afford such a blaze of light.”

The mystery was soon explained; for the cavalcade almost instantly halted, and the voice of Caleb Balderston was heard at the coach window, exclaiming, in accents broken by grief and fear, “Och, gentlemen—Och, my gude lords—Och, haud to the right!—Wolf’s Crag is burning, bower and ha’—a’ the rich plenishing outside and inside—a’ the fine graith, pictures, tapestries, needlework, hangings, and other decorements—a’ in a bleeze, as if they were nae mair than sae mony peats, or as muckle peas strae! Haud to the right, gentlemen, I implore ye—there is some sma’ provision making at Lucky Sma’ttrash’s—but O, wae for this night, and wae for me that lives to see it!”

Ravenswood was at first stunned by this new and unexpected calamity; but after a moment’s recollection, he sprang from the carriage, and hastily bidding his noble kinsman good-night, was about to ascend the hill towards the castle, the broad and full conflagration of which now flung forth a high column of red light that flick

ered far to seaward upon the dashing waves of the ocean.

“Take a horse, Master,” exclaimed the Marquis, greatly affected by this additional misfortune, so unexpectedly heaped upon his young protégé; “and give me my ambling palfrey;—and haste forward, you knaves, to see what can be done to save the furniture, or to extinguish the fire—ride, you knaves, for your lives!”

The attendants bustled together, and began to strike their horses with the spur, and call upon Caleb to show them the road. But the voice of that careful seneschal was heard above the tumult, “O stop—sirs, stop—turn bridle, for the love of mercy—add not loss of lives to the loss of world’s gear!—Thirty barrels of powder, landed out of a Dunkirk dogger in the auld lord’s time, a’ in the vaults of the auld tower,—the fire canna be far aff it, I trow—Lord’s sake, to the right, lads—to the right—let’s pit the hill atween us and peril—a wap wi’ a corner stane o’ Wolf’s Crag wad defy the doctor!”

It will readily be supposed that this announcement hurried the Marquis and his attendants into the route which Caleb prescribed, dragging Ravenswood along with them, although there was much in the matter which he could not possibly comprehend. “Gunpowder!” he exclaimed, laying hold of Caleb, who in vain endeavored to escape from him, “what gunpowder? How any quantity of powder could be in Wolf’s Crag without my knowledge, I cannot possibly comprehend.”

“But I can,” interrupted the Marquis, whispering him, “I can comprehend it thoroughly—for God’s sake, ask him no more questions at present.”

“There it is now,” said Caleb, extricating himself from his master, and adjusting his dress, “your honor will believe his lordship’s honorable testimony—His lordship minds weel, how, in the year that him they ca’d King Willie died—”

“Hush! hush, my good friend!” said the Marquis; “I shall satisfy your master upon that subject.”

“And the people at Wolf’s-hope”—said Ravenswood, “did none of them come to your assistance before the flame got so high?”

“Ay did they, mony ane of them, the rapscallions!” said Caleb; “but truly I was in nae hurry to let them into the Tower, where there were so much plate and valuables.”

“Confound you for an impudent liar!” said Ravenswood, in uncontrollable ire, “there was not a single ounce of—”

“Forby,” said the butler, most irreverently raising his voice to a pitch which drowned his master’s, “the fire made fast on us, owing to the store of tapestry and carved timmer in the banquetting ha’, and the loons ran like scauded rats sae sune as they heard of the gunpowther.”

“I do entreat,” said the Marquis to Ravenswood, “you will ask him no more questions.”

“Only one, my lord—What has become of poor Mysie?”

“Mysie?” said Caleb, “I had nae time to look about ony Mysie—she’s in the Tower, I se warrant, biding her awful doom.”

“By Heaven,” said Ravenswood, “I do not understand all this! The life of a faithful old creature is at stake—my lord, I will be withheld no longer—I will at least ride up, and see whether the danger is as imminent as this old fool pretends.”

“Weel, then, as I live by bread,” said Caleb, “Mysie is weel and safe. I saw her out of the castle before I left it mysell. Was I ganging to forget an auld fellow-servant?”

“What made you tell me the contrary this moment?” said his master.

“Did I tell you the contrary?” said Caleb; “then I maun hae been dreaming surely, or this awsome night has turned my judgment—but safe she is, and ne’er a living soul in the castle, a’ the better for them—they wad have gotten an unco heezy.”

The Master of Ravenswood, upon this assurance being solemnly reiterated, and notwithstanding his extreme wish to witness the last explosion which was to ruin to the ground the mansion of his fathers, suffered himself to be dragged onward toward the village of Wolf’s-hope, where not only the change-house, but that of our well known friend the cooper, were all prepared for reception of himself and his noble guest, with a liberality of provision which requires some explanation.

We omitted to mention in its place, that Lockhard, having fished out the truth concerning the mode by which Caleb had obtained the supplies for his banquet, the Lord Keeper, amused with the incident, and desirous at the time to gratify Ravenswood, had recommended the cooper of Wolf’s-hope to the official situation under government, the prospect of which had reconciled him to the loss of his wild-fowl. Mr. Girder’s preferment had occasioned a pleasing surprise to old Caleb; for when, some days after his master’s departure, he found himself absolutely compelled, by some necessary business, to visit the fishing hamlet, and was gliding like a ghost past the door of the cooper, for fear of being summoned to give some account of the progress of the solicitation in his favor, or, more probably, that the inmates might upbraid him with the false hope he had held out upon the subject, he heard himself, not without some apprehension, summoned at once in treble, tenor, and bass,—a trio performed by the voices of Mrs. Girder, old Dame Loup-the-dyke, and the good man of the dwelling,—“Mr. Caleb—Mr. Caleb—Mr. Caleb Balderston! I hope ye arena ganging dry-lipped by our door, and we sae muckle indebted to you?”

This might be said ironically as well as in earnest. Caleb argued the worst, turned a deaf ear to the trio aforesaid, and was moving doggedly on, his ancient castor pulled over his brows, and

his eyes bent on the ground, as if to count the flinty pebbles with which the rude pathway was causewayed. But on a sudden he found himself surrounded in his progress, like a stately merchantman in the Gut of Gibraltar (I hope the ladies will excuse the tarpaulin phrase) by three Algerine galleys.

"Gude guide us, Mr. Balderston!" said Mrs. Girder.

"Wha wad hae thought it of an auld and kend friend?" said the mother.

"And no sae muckle as stay to receive our thanks," said the cooper himself, "and frae the like o' me that seldom offers them? I am sure I hope there's nae ill seed sown between us, Mr. Balderston.—Only man that has said to ye, I am no gratefu' for the situation of Queen's cooper, let me hae a whample at him wi' mine cathe *—that's a'."

"My good friends—my dear friends," said Caleb, still doubting how the certainty of the matter might stand, "what needs a' this ceremony?—ane tries to serve their friends, and sometimes they may happen to prosper, and sometimes to misgie—naething I care to be fashed wi' less than thanks—I never could bide them."

"Faith, Mr. Balderston, ye suld hae been fashed wi' few o' mine," said the downright man of staves and hoops, "if I had only your gude-will to thank ye for—I suld e'en hae set the guse, and the wild deukes, and the runlet of sack, to balance that account. Gude-will, man, is a geizen'd tub, that hands in nae liquor—but gude-deed's like the cask tight, round, and sound, that will hand liquor for the king."

"Have ye no heard of our letter," said the mother-in-law, "making our John the Queen's cooper for certain?—and scarce a chield that had ever hammered gird upon tub but was applying for it?"

"Have I heard!!!" said Caleb (who now found how the wind set), with an accent of exceeding contempt at the doubt expressed—"Have I heard, quo' she!!!"—and as he spoke, he changed his shambling, skulking, dodging pace, into a manly and authoritative step, re-adjusted his cocked hat, and suffered his brow to emerge from under it in all the pride of aristocracy, like the sun from behind a cloud.

"To be sure he canna but hae heard," said the good woman.

"Aye, to be sure, it's impossible that I should," said Caleb; "and sae I'll be the first to kiss ye, Joe, and wish you, cooper, much joy of your preferment, naething doubting but ye ken wha are your friends, and have helped ye, and can help ye. I thought it right to look a wee strange upon it at first," added Caleb, "just to see if ye were made of the right mettle—but ye ring true, ad, ye ring true!"

So saying, with a most lordly air he kissed the

* Angliet, adae.

woman, and abandoned his hand with an air of serene patronage, to the hearty shake of Mr. Girder's horn-hard palm. Upon this complete, and to Caleb most satisfactory, information, he did not, it may readily be believed, hesitate to accept an invitation to a solemn feast, to which were invited, not only all the *notables* of the village, but even his ancient antagonist, Mr. Dingwall, himself. At this festivity he was, of course, the most welcome and most honored guest; and so well did he ply the company with stories of what he could do with his master, his master with the Lord Keeper, the Lord Keeper with the Council, and the Council with the King, that before the company dismissed (which was, indeed, rather at an early hour than a late one), every man of note in the village was ascending to the top-gallant of some ideal preferment by the ladder of ropes which Caleb had presented to their imagination. Nay, the cunning butler regained in that moment, not only all the influence he possessed formerly over the villagers, when the baronial family which he served were at the proudest, but acquired even an accession of importance. The writer—the very attorney himself—such is the thirst of preferment—felt the force of the attraction, and taking an opportunity to draw Caleb into a corner, spoke, with affectionate regret, of the declining health of the sheriff-clerk of the county.

"An excellent man—a most valuable man, Mr. Caleb—but fat sall I say!—we are peer feckless bodices—here the day, and awa by cock-screech the morn—and if he failzie, there maun be somebody in his place—and gif that ye could airt it my way, I sall be thankful, man—a glove stuffed wi' gowd nobles—an' hark ye, man, something canny tirl yourself—and the Wolf's-hope carles to settle kindly wi' the Master of Ravenswood—that is, Lord Ravenswood—God bless his lordship!"

A smile, and a hearty squeeze by the hand was the suitable answer to this overture—and Caleb made his escape from the jovial party, in order to avoid committing himself by any special promises.

"The Lord be gude to me," said Caleb, when he found himself in the open air, and at liberty to give vent to the self-exultation with which he was, as it were, distended: "did ever any man see sic a set of green-gaislings!—the very pick-maws and solan-geese outby yonder at the Bass hae ten times their sense!—God, an I had been the Lord High Commissioner to the Estates o' Parliament, they couldna hae beffumm'd me mair—and, to speak Heaven's truth, I could hardly hae beffumm'd them better neither! But the writer—ha! ha! ha!—ah, ha! ha! ha! mercy on me, that I suld live in my old days to gie the gang-by to the very writer!—Sheriff-clerk!! But I hae an auld account to settle wi' the carle; and to make amends for by-gones, the office shall just cost him as much time-serving, as if he were to get it in gude earnest—of whilk there is sma' appearance, unless the Master learns mair the

ways of this world, whilk it is muckle to be doubted that he never will do."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Why flames you far summit—why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast!—
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From thine eyry, that beacons the darkness of Heaven.

CAMPBELL.

THE circumstances announced in the conclusion of the last chapter, will account for the ready and cheerful reception of the Marquis of A—and the Master of Ravenswood in the village of Wolf's-hope. In fact, Caleb had no sooner announced the conflagration of the Tower, than the whole hamlet were upon foot to hasten to extinguish the flames. And although that zealous adherent diverted their zeal by intimating the formidable contents of the subterranean apartments, yet the check only turned their assiduity into another direction. Never had there been such slaughtering of capons, and fat geese, and barn-door fowls,—never such boiling of *reested* hams,—never such making of ear-cakes and sweet scones, Selkirk bannocks cookies, and petticoat-tails,—delicacies little known to the present generation. Never had there been such a tapping of barrels, and such uncorking of greybeards, in the village of Wolf's-hope. All the inferior houses were thrown open for the reception of the Marquis's dependents, who came, it was thought, as precursors of the shower of preferment, which hereafter was to leave the rest of Scotland dry, in order to distil its rich dew on the village of Wolf's-hope under Lammermoor. The minister put in his claim to have the guests of distinction lodged at the Manse, having his eye, it was thought, upon a neighboring preferment, where the incumbent was sickly; but Mr. Balderston destined that honor to the cooper, his wife, and wife's mother, who danced for joy at the preference thus assigned them.

Many a beck and many a bow welcomed these noble guests to as good entertainment as persons of such rank could set before such visitors; and the old dame, who had formerly lived in Ravenswood Castle, and knew, as she said, the ways of the nobility, was in no whit wanting in arranging matters, as well as circumstances permitted, according to the etiquette of the times. The cooper's house was so roomy, that each guest had his separate retiring room, to which they were ushered with all due ceremony, while the plentiful supper was in the act of being placed upon the table.

Ravenswood no sooner found himself alone, than, impelled by a thousand feelings, he left the apartment, the house, and the village, and hastily retraced his steps to the brow of the hill, which rose betwixt the village, and screened it from the tower, in order to view the final fall of the house of his fathers. Some idle boys from the hamlet had taken the same direction out of curiosity, having first witnessed the arrival of the coach-and-six and its attendants. As they ran one by one past

the Master, calling to each other to "come and see the auld tower blaw up in the lift like the peel ings of an ingan," he could not but feel himself moved with indignation. "And these are the sons of my father's vassals," he said—"of men bound, both by law and gratitude, to follow our steps through battle, and fire, and flood; and now the destruction of their lige-lord's house is but a holiday's sight to them!"

These exasperating reflections were partly expressed in the acrimony with which he exclaimed, on feeling himself pulled by the cloak,—"What do you want, you dog?"

"I am a dog, and an auld dog too," answered Caleb, for it was he who had taken the freedom, "and I am like to get a dog's wages—but it does not signification a pinch of sneeshing, for I am ower auld a dog to learn new tricks, or to follow a new master."

As he spoke, Ravenswood attained the ridge of the hill from which Wolf's Crag was visible; the flames had entirely sunk down, and to his great surprise, there was only a dusky reddening upon the clouds immediately over the castle, which seemed the reflection of the embers of the sunken fire.

"The place cannot have blown up," said the Master; "we must have heard the report—if a quarter of the gunpowder was there you tell me of, it would have been heard twenty miles off."

"It's very like it wad," said Balderston, composedly.

"Then the fire cannot have reached the vaults?"

"It's like no," answered Caleb, with the same impenetrable gravity.

"Hark ye, Caleb," said his master, "this grows a little too much for my patience. I must go and examine how matters stand at Wolf's Crag myself."

"Your honor is ganging to gang nae sic gate," said Caleb, firmly.

"And why not?" said Ravenswood, sharply; "who or what shall prevent me?"

"Even I mysell," said Caleb, with the same determination.

"You, Balderston!" replied the Master; "you are forgetting yourself, I think."

"But I think no," said Balderston; "for I can just tell ye a' about the castle on this knowe-head as weel as if ye were at it. Only dinna pit yourself into a kippage, and expose yourself before the weans, or before the Marquis, when ye gang down-by."

"Speak out, you old fool," replied his master "and let me know the best and the worst at once."

"On, the best and the warst is, just that the tower is standing hale and feir, as safe and as empty as when ye left it."

"Indeed!—and the fire?" said Ravenswood.

"Not a gleed of fire, then, except the bit kindling peat, and maybe a spunk in Mysie's cutt-pipe," replied Caleb.

"But the flame!" demanded Ravenswood; "the broad blaze which might have been seen ten miles off—what occasioned that?"

"Hout awa! it's an auld saying and a true,—

Little's the light
Will be seen in a mirk night.

A wheen fern and horse litter that I fired in the court-yard, after sending back the loun of a footman; and, to speak Heaven's truth, the next time that ye send or bring ony body here, let them be gentles, allenarly without ony fremd servants, like that chield Lockhard, to be gledging and gleeing about, and looking upon the wrang side of ane's house-keeping, to the discredit of the family, and forcing ane to damn their souls wi' telling ae lee after another faster than I can count them—I wad rather set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family dishonored in the sort."

"Upon my word, I am infinitely obliged by the proposal, Caleb," said his master, scarce able to restrain his laughter, though rather angry at the same time. "But the gunpowder?—is there such a thing in the tower?—The Marquis seemed to know of it."

"The pounther—ha! ha! ha!—the Marquis—ha! ha! ha!" replied Caleb; "if your honor were to brain me, I behooved to laugh—the Marquis—the pounther!—was it there? ay, it was there. Did he ken o't!—my certie! the Marquis kend o't, and it was the best o' the game; for, when I could not pacify your honor wi' a' that I could say, I aye threw out a word mair about the gun-pounther, and garr'd the Marquis tak the job in his ain hand."

"But you have not answered my question," said the Master, impatiently; "how came the powder there, and where is it now?"

"Ou, it came there, an ye maun needs ken," said Caleb, looking mysteriously, and whispering, "when there was like to be a wee bit rising here; and the Marquis, and a' the great lords o' the north, were a' in it, and many a gudely gun and broadsword were ferried ower frae Dunkirk for by the pounther—awfu' wark we had getting them into the tower under cloud o' night, for ye maun think it wasna every body could be trusted wi' sic kittle jobs—But if ye will gae hame to your supper, I will tell you a' about it as ye gang down."

"And these wretched boys," said Ravenswood, "is it your pleasure they are to sit there all night, to wait for the blowing up of a tower that is not even on fire?"

"Surely not, if it is your honor's pleasure that they suld gang hame; although," added Caleb, "it wadna do them a grain's damage—they wad screech less the next day, and sleep the sounder at e'en—But just as your honor likes."

Stepping accordingly towards the urchins who manned the knolls near which they stood, Caleb informed them, in an authoritative tone, that their honors Lord Ravenswood and the Marquis of A—had given orders that the tower was not to blow up till next day at noon. The boys dispersed

upon this comfortable assurance. One or two, however, followed Caleb for more information, particularly the urchin whom he had cheated while officiating as turnspit, who screamed, "Mr. Balderston! Mr. Balderston! than the castle's gane out like an auld wife's spunk?"

"To be sure it is, callant," said the butler; "do ye think the castle of as great a lord as Lord Ravenswood wad continue in a bleeze, and him standing looking on wi' his ain very een?—It's aye right," continued Caleb, shaking off his ragged page, and closing in to his master, "to train up weans, as the wise man says, in the way they should go, and, aboon a', to teach them respect to their superiors."

"But all this while, Caleb, you have never told me what became of the arms and powder," said Ravenswood.

"Why, as for the arms," said Caleb, "it was just like the bairns' rhyme—

Some gae east, and some gae west,
And some gae to the craw's nest;

And for the pounther, I'e'en changed it, as occasion served, with the skippers o' Dutch luggers and French vessels, for gin and brandy, and it served the house mony a year—a gude swap too, between what cheerech the soul of man and that which dingeth it clean out of his body; forby, I keptit a wheen pounds of it for yourself when ye wanted to take the pleasure o' shooting—whiles, in these latter days, I wad hardly hae kend else whar to get pounther for your pleasure.—And now that your anger is ower, sir, wasna that weel managed o' me, and arena you far better sorted down yonder, than ye could hae been in your ain auld ruins uphy yonder, as the case stands wi' us now?—the mair's the pity."

"I believe you may be right, Caleb; but, before burning down my castle, either in jest or in earnest," said Ravenswood, "I think I had a right to be in the secret."

"Fie for shame, your honor!" replied Caleb; "it fits an auld carle like me weel enough to tell lees for the credit of the family, but it wadna be seem the like of your honor's sell; besides, young folk are no judicious, they cannot make the maist of a bit figment. Now this fire—for a fire it shall be, if I suld burn the auld stable to make it mair feasible—this fire, besides that it will be an excuse for asking ony thing we want through the country, or down at the haven—this fire will settle mony things on an honorable footing for the family's credit, that cost me telling twenty daily lees to a wheen idle chaps and queans, and what's waur, without gaining credence."

"That was hard, indeed, Caleb; but I do not see how this fire should help your veracity or your credit."

"There it is now!" said Caleb; "wasna I saying that young folk had a green judgment?—How suld it help me, quotha?—it will be a creditable apology for the honor of the family for this score of years to come if it is weel guided. Where's the family pictures? says ae meddling body—the

great fire at Wolf's Crag, answers I. Where's the family plate? says another—the great fire, says I; wha was to think of plate, when life and limb were in danger?—Where's the wardrobe and the linens?—where's the tapestries and the decorations?—beds of state, twilts, pands, and testers, napery and brodered wark?—The fire—the fire—the fire. Guide the fire weel, and it will serve ye for a' that ye suld have and have not—and, in some sort, a gude excuse is better than the things themselves; for they maun crack and wear out, and be consumed by time, whereas a gude offcome, prudently and comfortably handled, may serve a nobleman and his family, Lord kens how lang?"

Ravenswood was too well acquainted with his butler's pertinacity and self-opinion, to dispute the point with him any farther. Leaving Caleb, therefore, to the enjoyment of his own successful ingenuity, he returned to the hamlet, where he found the Marquis and the good woman of the mansion under some anxiety—the former on account of his absence, the others for the discredit their cookery might sustain by the delay of the supper. All were now at ease, and heard with pleasure that the fire at the castle had burnt out of itself without reaching the vaults, which was the only information that Ravenswood thought it proper to give in public concerning the events of his butler's stratagem.

They sat down to an excellent supper. No invitation could prevail on Mr. and Mrs. Girder, even in their own house, to sit down at table with guests of such high quality. They remained standing in the apartment, and acted the part of respectful and careful attendants on the company. Such were the manners of the time. The elder dame, confident through her age and connexion with the Ravenswood family, was less scrupulously ceremonious. She played a mixed part betwixt that of the hostess of an inn, and the mistress of a private house, who receives guests above her own degree.

She recommended, and even pressed, what she thought best, and was herself easily entreated to take a moderate share of the good cheer, in order to encourage her guests by her own example. Often she interrupted herself, to express her regret that "my Lord did not eat—that the Master was pyking a bare bane—that, to be sure, there was naething there fit to set before their honors—that Lord Allan, rest his saul, used to like a pounthered guse, and said it was Latin for a tass o' brandy—that the brandy came frae France direct; for, for a' the English laws and gangers, the Wolf's-hope brigs hadna forgotten the gate to Dunkirk."

Here the cooper admonished his mother-in-law with his elbow, which procured him the following special notice in the progress of her speech:

"Ye needna be dunshin that gate, John," continued the old lady; "naebody says that ye ken whar the brandy comes frae; and it wadna be

fitting ye should, and you the Queen's cooper; and what signifies't," continued she, addressing Lord Ravenswood, "to king, queen, or keiser, whar an auld wife like me buys her pickle sneeshin, or her drap brandy-wine, to hand her heart up?"

Having thus extricated herself from her supposed false step, Dame Loup-the-dyke proceeded, during the rest of the evening, to supply, with great animation, and very little assistance from her guests, the funds necessary for the support of the conversation, until, declining any further circulation of their glass, her guests requested her permission to retire to their apartments.

The Marquis occupied the chamber of dais, which, in every house above the rank of a mere cottage, was kept sacred for such high occasions as the present. The modern finishing with plaster was then unknown, and tapestry was confined to the houses of the nobility and superior gentry. The cooper, therefore, who was a man of some vanity, as well as some wealth, had imitated the fashion observed by the inferior landholders and clergy, who usually ornamented their state apartments with hangings of a sort of stamped leather, manufactured in the Netherlands, garnished with trees and animals executed in copper foil, and with many a pithy sentence of morality, which, although couched in Low Dutch, were perhaps as much attended to in practice as if written in broad Scotch. The whole had somewhat of a gloomy aspect; but the fire, composed of old pitch-barrel staves, blazed merrily up the chimney; the bed was decorated with linen of most fresh and dazzling whiteness, which had never before been used, and might, perhaps, have never been used at all, but for this high occasion. On the toilet beside, stood an old-fashioned mirror, in a slagree frame, part of the dispersed finery of the neighboring castle. It was flanked by a long-necked bottle of Florence wine, by which stood a glass nearly as tall, resembling in shape that which Teniers usually places in the hands of his own portraits, when he paints himself as mingling in the revels of a country village. To counterbalance those foreign sentinels, there mounted guard on the other side of the mirror two stout warders of Scottish lineage; a jug, namely, of double ale, which held a Scotch pint, and a quegh, or bicker, of ivory and ebony, hooped with silver, the work of John Girder's own hands and the pride of his heart. Besides these preparations against thirst, there was a goodly diet-loaf, or sweet cake; so that, with such auxiliaries, the apartment seemed victualled against a siege of two or three days.

It only remains to say, that the Marquis's valet was in attendance, displaying his master's brocaded night-gown, and richly-embroidered velvet cap, lined and faced with Brussels lace, upon a huge leathern easy chair wheeled round so as to have the full advantage of the comfortable fire which we have already mentioned. We, therefore, commit that eminent person to his night's

repose, trusting he profited by the ample preparations made for his accommodation,—preparations which we have mentioned in detail, as illustrative of ancient Scottish manners.

It is not necessary we should be equally minute in describing the sleeping apartment of the Master of Ravenswood, which was that usually occupied by the goodman and goodwife themselves. It was comfortably hung with a sort of warm colored worsted, manufactured in Scotland, approaching in texture to what is now called shaloon. A staring picture of John Girder himself ornamented this dormitory, painted by a starving Frenchman, who had, God knows how or why, strolled over from Flushing or Dunkirk to Wolf's-hope in a smuggling dogger. The features were, indeed, those of the stubborn, opinionative, yet sensible artisan, but Monsieur had contrived to throw a French grace into the look and manner, so utterly inconsistent with the dogged gravity of the original, that it was impossible to look at it without laughing. John and his family, however, piqued themselves not a little upon this picture, and were proportionally censured by the neighborhood, who pronounced that the cooper, in sitting for the same, and yet more in presuming to hang it up in his bedchamber, had exceeded his privilege as the richest man of the village; at once stepped beyond the bounds of his own rank, and encroached upon those of the superior orders; and, in fine, had been guilty of a very overweening act of vanity and presumption. Respect for the memory of my deceased friend, Mr. Richard Tinto, has obliged me to treat this matter at some length; but I spare the reader his prolix, though curious observations, as well upon the character of the French school, as upon the state of painting in Scotland, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The other preparations of the Master's sleeping apartment were similar to those in the chamber of daïs.

At the usual early hour of that period, the Marquis of A— and his kinsman prepared to resume their journey. This could not be done without an ample breakfast, in which cold meat and hot meat, and oatmeal flummery, wine and spirits, and milk varied by every possible mode of preparation, evinced the same desire to do honor to their guests which had been shown by the hospitable owners of the mansion upon the evening before. All the bustle of preparation for departure now resounded through Wolf's-hope. There was paying of bills and shaking of hands, and saddling of horses, and harnessing of carriages, and distributing of drink-money. The Marquis left a broad piece for the gratification of John Girder's household, which he, the said John, was for some time disposed to convert to his own use; Dingwall the writer assuring him he was justified in so doing, seeing he was the disburser of those expenses which were the occasion of the gratification. But, notwithstanding this legal authority, John could not find in his heart to dim-

the splendor of his late hospitality, by pocketing anything in the nature of a gratuity. He only assured his menials he would consider them as a damned ungrateful pack, if they bought a gill of brandy elsewhere than out of his own stores; and as the drink-money was likely to go to its legitimate use, he comforted himself that, in this manner, the Marquis's donative would, without any impeachment of credit and character, come ultimately into his own exclusive possession.

While arrangements were making for departure, Ravenswood made blithe the heart of his ancient butler, by informing him, cautiously, however (for he knew Caleb's warmth of imagination), of the probable change which was about to take place in his fortunes. He deposited with Balderston, at the same time, the greater part of his slender funds, with an assurance, which he was obliged to reiterate more than once, that he himself had sufficient supplies in certain prospect. He, therefore, enjoined Caleb, as he valued his favor, to desist from all farther manoeuvres against the inhabitants of Wolf's-hope, their cellars, poultry yards, and substance whatsoever. In this prohibition, the old domestic acquiesced more readily than his master expected.

"It was doubtless," he said, "a shame, a discredit, and a sin, to harry the poor creatures, when the family were in circumstances to live honorably on their ain means; and there might be wisdom," he added, "in giving them a while's breathing time at any rate, that they might be the more readily brought forward upon his honor's future occasions."

This matter being settled, and having taken an affectionate farewell of his old domestic, the Master rejoined his noble relative, who was now ready to enter his carriage. The two landladies, old and young, having received in all kindly greeting, a kiss from each of their noble guests, stood simpering at the door of their house, as the coach and six, followed by its train of clattering horsemen, thundered out of the village. John Girder also stood upon his threshold, now looking at his honored right hand, which had been so lately shaken by a marquis and a lord, and now giving a glance into the interior of his mansion, which manifested all the disarray of the late revel, as if balancing the distinction which he had attained with the expenses of the entertainment.

At length he opened his oracular jaws. "Let every man and woman here set about their ain business, as if there was nae sic thing as marquis or master, duke or drake, laird or lord, in this world. Let the house be reed up, the broken meat set by, and if there is ony thing totally uneatable, let it be gien to the poor folk; and, gude-mother and wife, I hae just ae thing to entreat ye, that you will never speak to me a single word, good or bad, anent a' this nonsense wark, but keep a' your cracks about it to yoursell and your kimmers, for my head is weeligh dang donnan wi' it already."

As John's authority was tolerably absolute,

all departed to their usual occupations, leaving him to build castles in the air, if he had a mind, upon the court favor which he had acquired by the expenditure of his worldly substance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Why, now I have Dame Fortune by the forelock,
And if she escapes my grasp, the fault is mine;
He that hath buffeted with stern adversity,
Best knows to shape his course to favoring breezes.

OLD PLAY.

OUR travellers reached Edinburgh without any farther adventure, and the Master of Ravenswood, as had been previously settled, took up his abode with his noble friend.

In the meantime, the political crisis which had been expected took place, and the Tory party obtained, in the Scottish, as in the English councils of Queen Anne, a short-lived ascendancy, of which it is not our business to trace either the cause or consequences. Suffice it to say, that it affected the different political parties according to the nature of their principles. In England, many of the High Church party, with Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, at their head, affected to separate their principles from those of the Jacobites, and, on that account, obtained the denomination of Whimsicals. The Scottish High Church party, on the contrary, or, as they termed themselves, the Cavaliers, were more consistent, if not so prudent, in their politics, and viewed all the changes now made, as preparatory to calling to the throne, upon the Queen's demise, her brother, the Chevalier de St. George. Those who had suffered in his service, now entertained the most unreasonable hopes, not only of indemnification, but of vengeance upon their political adversaries; while families attached to the Whig interest, saw nothing before them but a renewal of the hardships they had undergone during the reigns of Charles the Second and his brother, and a retaliation of the confiscation which had been inflicted upon the Jacobites during that of King William.

But the most alarmed at the change of system, was that prudential set of persons, some of whom are found in all governments, but who abound in a provincial administration like that of Scotland during the period, and who are what Cromwell called waiters upon Providence, or, in other words, uniform adherents to the party who are uppermost. Many of these hastened to read their recantation to the Marquis of A—; and, as it was easily seen that he took a deep interest in the affairs of his kinsman, the master of Ravenswood, they were the first to suggest measures for retrieving at least a part of his property, and for restoring him in blood against his father's attainder.

Old Lord Turntippet professed to be one of the most anxious for the success of these measures; for "it grieved him to the very soul," he said, "to see so brave a young gentleman, of sic

auld and undoubted nobility, and what was mair than a' that, a bluid relation of the Marquis of A—, the man whom," he swore, "he honored most upon the face of the yearth, brought to so severe a pass. For his ain puir peculiar," as he said, "and to contribute something to the rehabilitation of sae auld ane house," the said Turntippet sent in three family pictures lacking the frames, and six high-backed chairs, with worked Turkey cushions, having the crest of Ravenswood brodered thereon, without charging a penny either of the principal or interest they had cost him, when he bought them, sixteen years before, at a roup of the furniture of Lord Ravenswood's lodgings in the Canongate.

Much more to Lord Turntippet's dismay than to his surprise, although he affected to feel more of the latter than the former, the Marquis received his gift very drily, and observed, that his lordship's restitution, if he expected it to be received by the Master of Ravenswood and his friends, must comprehend a pretty large farm, which, having been mortgaged to Turntippet for a very inadequate sum, he had contrived, during the confusion of the family affairs, and by means well understood by the lawyers of that period, to acquire to himself in absolute property.

The old time-serving lord winced excessively under this requisition, protesting to God, that he saw no occasion the lad could have for the instant possession of the land, seeing he would doubtless now recover the bulk of his estate from Sir William Ashton, to which he was ready to contribute by every means in his power, as was just and reasonable; and finally declaring, that he was willing to settle the land on the young gentleman, after his own natural demise.

But all these excuses availed nothing, and he was compelled to disgorge the property, on receiving back the sum for which it had been mortgaged. Having no other means of making peace with the higher powers, he returned home sorrowful and malcontent, complaining to his confidants, "that every mutation or change in the state had hitherto been productive of some sma' advantage to him in his ain quiet affairs; but that the present had (pize upon it!) cost him one of the best penfeathers o' his wing."

Similar measures were threatened against others who had profited by the wreck of the fortune of Ravenswood; and Sir William Ashton, in particular, was menaced with an appeal to the House of Peers against the judicial sentences under which he held the Castle and Barony of Ravenswood. With him, however, the Master, as well for Lucy's sake as on account of the hospitality he had received from him, felt himself under the necessity of proceeding with great candor. He wrote to the late Lord Keeper, for he no longer held that office, stating frankly the engagement which existed between him and Miss Ashton, requesting his permission for their union, and assuring him of his willingness to put the settlement of all matters between them upon

such a footing, as Sir William himself should think favorable.

The same messenger was charged with a letter to Lady Ashton, deprecating any cause of displeasure which the Master might unintentionally have given her, enlarging upon his attachment to Miss Ashton, and the length to which it had proceeded, and conjuring the lady, as a Douglas in nature as well as in name, generously to forget ancient prejudices and misunderstandings; and to believe that the family had acquired a friend, and she herself a respectful and attached humble servant, in him who subscribed himself Edgar, Master of Ravenswood.

A third letter Ravenswood addressed to Lucy, and the messenger was instructed to find some secret and secure means of delivering it into her own hands. It contained the strongest protestations of continued affection, and dwelt upon the approaching change of the writer's fortunes, as chiefly valuable by tending to remove the impediments to their union. He related the steps he had taken to overcome the prejudices of her parents, and especially of her mother, and expressed his hopes they might prove effectual. If not, he still trusted that his absence from Scotland upon an important and honorable mission, might give time for prejudices to die away; while he hoped and trusted Miss Ashton's constancy, on which he had the most implicit reliance, would baffle any effort that might be used to divert her attachment. Much more there was, which, however interesting to the lovers themselves, would afford the reader neither interest nor information. To each of these three letters the Master of Ravenswood received an answer, but by different means of conveyance, and certainly couched in very different styles.

Lady Ashton answered his letter by his own messenger, who was not allowed to remain at Ravenswood a moment longer than she was engaged in penning these lines. "For the hand of Mr. Ravenswood of Wolf's Crag—These:

"SIR, UNKNOWN.—I have received a letter, signed Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, concerning the writer whereof I am uncertain, seeing that the honors of such a family were forfeited for high treason in the person of Allan, late Lord Ravenswood. Sir, if you shall happen to be the person so subscribing yourself, you will please to know, that I claim the full interest of a parent in Miss Lucy Ashton, which I have disposed of irrevocably in behalf of a worthy person. And, sir, were this otherwise, I would not listen to a proposal from you, or any of your house, seeing their hand has been uniformly held up against the freedom of the subject, and the immunities of God's kirk. Sir, it is not a flitting blink of prosperity which can change my constant opinion in this regard, seeing it has been my lot before now, like holy David, to see the wicked great in power, and flourishing like a green bay tree; nevertheless I passed, and they were not, and the place

thereof knew them no more. Wishing you to lay these things to your heart for your own sake so far as they may concern you, I pray you to take no farther notice of her, who desires to remain your unknown servant,

"MARGARET DOUGLAS, otherwise ASHTON."

About two days after he had received this very unsatisfactory epistle, the Master of Ravenswood, while walking up the High Street of Edinburgh, was jostled by a person, in whom, as the man pulled off his hat to make an apology, he recognised Lockhart, the confidential domestic of Sir William Ashton. The man bowed, slipped a letter into his hand, and disappeared. The packet contained four close-written folios, from which, however, as is sometimes incident to the compositions of great lawyers, little could be extracted, excepting that the writer felt himself in a very puzzling predicament.

Sir William spoke at length of his high value and regard for his dear young friend, the Master of Ravenswood, and of his very extreme high value and regard for the Marquis of A——, his very dear old friend;—he trusted that any measures that they might adopt, in which he was concerned, would be carried on with due regard to the sanctity of decreets, and judgments obtained *in foro contentioso*; protesting before men and angels, that if the law of Scotland, as declared in her supreme courts, were to undergo a reversal in the English House of Lords, the evils which would thence arise to the public would inflict a greater wound upon his heart, than any loss he might himself sustain by such irregular proceedings. He flourished much on generosity and forgiveness of mutual injuries, and hinted at the mutability of human affairs, always favorite topics with the weaker party in politics. He pathetically lamented, and gently censured, the haste which had been used in depriving him of his situation of Lord Keeper, which his experience had enabled him to fill with some advantage to the public, without so much as giving him an opportunity of explaining how far his own views of general politics might essentially differ from those now in power. He was convinced the Marquis of A—— had as sincere intentions towards the public, as himself or any man; and if, upon a conference, they could have agreed upon the measures by which it was to be pursued, his experience and his interest should have gone to support the present administration. Upon the engagement betwixt Ravenswood and his daughter, he spoke in a dry and confused manner. He regretted so premature a step as the engagement of the young people should have been taken, and conjured the Master to remember he had never given any encouragement thereunto; and observed, that, as a transaction *inter minores*, and without concurrence of his daughter's natural curators, the engagement was inept, and void in law. This precipitate measure, he added, had produced a very bad effect upon Lady Ashton's

mind, which it was impossible at present to remove. Her son, Colonel Douglas Ashton, had embraced her prejudices in the fullest extent, and it was impossible for Sir William to adopt a course disagreeable to them, without a fatal and irreconcilable breach in his family, which was not at present to be thought of. Time, the great physician, he hoped, would mend all.

In a postscript, Sir William said something more explicitly, which seemed to intimate, that rather than the law of Scotland should sustain a severe wound through his sides, by a reversal of the judgment of her supreme courts, in the case of the Barony of Ravenswood, through the intervention of what, with all submission, he must term a foreign court of appeal, he himself would extrajudicially consent to considerable sacrifices.

From Lucy Ashton, by some unknown conveyance, the Master received the following lines:—"I received yours, but it was at the utmost risk; do not attempt to write again till better times. I am sore beset, but I will be true to my word, while the exercise of my reason is vouchsafed to me. That you are happy and prosperous is some consolation, and my situation requires it all." The note was signed L. A.

This letter filled Ravenswood with the most lively alarm. He made many attempts, notwithstanding her prohibition, to convey letters to Miss Ashton, and even to obtain an interview; but his plans were frustrated, and he had only the mortification to learn, that anxious and effectual precautions had been taken to prevent the possibility of their correspondence. The Master was the more distressed by these circumstances, as it became impossible to delay his departure from Scotland, upon the important mission which had been confided to him. Before his departure, he put Sir William Ashton's letter into the hands of the Marquis of A——, who observed with a smile, that Sir William's day of grace was past, and that he had now to learn which side of the hedge the sun had got to. It was with the greatest difficulty that Ravenswood extorted from the Marquis a promise, that he would compromise the proceedings in Parliament, providing Sir William should be disposed to acquiesce in a union between him and Lucy Ashton.

"I would hardly," said the Marquis, "consent to your throwing away your birth-right in this manner, were I not perfectly confident that Lady Ashton, or Lady Douglas, or whatever she calls herself, will, as Scotchmen say, keep her threep; and that her husband dares not contradict her."

"But yet," said the Master, "I trust your lordship will consider my engagement as sacred?"

"Believe my word of honor," said the Marquis, "I would be a friend even to your follies; and having thus told you my opinion, I will endeavor, as occasion offers, to serve you according to your own."

The Master of Ravenswood could but thank his generous kinsman and patron, and leave him full power to act in all his affairs. He departed

from Scotland upon his mission, which, it was supposed, might detain him upon the Continent for some months.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Was ever woman in this humor wooed!
Was ever woman in this humor won!
I'll have her.

RICHARD THE THIRD.

TWELVE months had passed away since the Master of Ravenswood's departure for the Continent, and although his return to Scotland had been expected in a much shorter space, yet the affairs of his mission, or, according to a prevailing report, others of a nature personal to himself, still detained him abroad. In the meantime, the altered state of affairs in Sir William Ashton's family may be gathered from the following conversation which took place betwixt Bucklaw and his confidential bottle-companion and dependent, the noted Captain Craigenfelt.

They were seated on either side of the huge sepulchral looking freestone chimney in the low hall at Girmington. A wood fire blazed merrily in the grate; a round oaken table, placed between them, supported a stoup of excellent claret, two rummer glasses, and other good cheer; and yet, with all these appliances and means to boot, the countenance of the patron was dubious, doubtful, and unsatisfied, while the invention of his dependent was taxed to the utmost, to parry what he most dreaded, a fit, as he called it, of the sulens, on the part of his protector. After a long pause, only interrupted by the devil's tattoo, which Bucklaw kept peating against the hearth with the toe of his boot, Craigenfelt at last ventured to break silence. "May I be double distanced," said he, "if ever I saw a man in my life have less the air of a bridegroom! Cut me out of feather, if you have not more the look of a man condemned to be hanged!"

"My kind thanks for the compliment," replied Bucklaw; "but I suppose you think upon the predicament in which you yourself are most likely to be placed;—and pray, Captain Craigenfelt, if it please your worship, why should I look merry, when I am sad, and devilish sad too?"

"And that's what vexes me," said Craigenfelt. "Here is this match, the best in the whole country, and which you were so anxious about, is on the point of being concluded, and you are as sulky as a bear that has lost its whelps."

"I do not know," answered the Laird doggedly, "whether I should conclude it or not, it was not that I am too far forwards to leap back."

"Leap back!" exclaimed Craigenfelt, with a well-assumed air of astonishment, "that would be playing the back-game with a witness! Leap back, why is not the girl's fortune——"

"The young lady's, if you please," said Hayston, interrupting him.

"Well, well, no disrespect meant—Will Miss

Ashton's tocher not weigh against any in Lothian?"

"Granted," answered Bucklaw; "but I care not a penny for her tocher—I have enough of my own."

"And the mother, that loves you like her own child?"

"Better than some of her children, I believe," said Bucklaw, "or there would be little love wared on the matter."

"And Colonel Sholto Douglas Ashton, who desires the marriage above all earthly things?"

"Because," said Bucklaw, "he expects to carry the county of—through my interest."

"And the father, who is as keen to see the match concluded, as ever I have been to win a main?"

"Ay," said Bucklaw, in the same disparaging manner, "it lies with Sir William's policy to secure the next best match, since he cannot barter his child to save the great Ravenswood estate, which the English House of Lords are about to wrench out of his clutches."

"What say you to the young lady herself?" said Craigenfelt; "the finest young woman in all Scotland, one that you used to be so fond of when she was cross, and now she consents to have you, and gives up her engagement with Ravenswood, you are for jibbing—I must say, the devil's in ye, when ye neither know what you would have, nor what you would want."

"I'll tell you my meaning in a word," answered Bucklaw, getting up and walking through the room; "I want to know what the devil is the cause of Miss Ashton's changing her mind so suddenly?"

"And what need you care," said Craigenfelt, "since the change is in your favor?"

"I'll tell you what it is," returned his patron, "I never knew much of that sort of fine ladies, and I believe they may be as capricious as the devil; but there is something in Miss Ashton's change, a devilish deal too sudden, and too serious for a mere flisk of her own. I'll be bound Lady Ashton understands every machine for breaking in the human mind, and there are as many as there are cannon-bits, martingales, and cavassons for young colts."

"And if that were not the case," said Craigenfelt, "how the devil should we ever get them into training at all?"

"And that's true, too," said Bucklaw, suspending his march through the dining-room, and leaning upon the back of a chair.—"And besides, here's Ravenswood in the way still; do you think he'll give up Lucy's engagement?"

"To be sure he will," answered Craigenfelt; "what good can it do him to refuse, since he wishes to marry another woman, and she another man?"

"And you believe seriously," said Bucklaw, "that he is going to marry the foreign lady we heard of?"

"You heard yourself," answered Craigenfelt,

"what Captain Westenho said about it, and the great preparation made for their blithesome bridal."

"Captain Westenho," replied Bucklaw, "has rather too much of your own cast about him, Craigie, to make what Sir William would call a famous witness." He drinks deep, plays deep, swears deep, and I suspect can lie and cheat a little into the bargain;—useful qualities, Craigie, if kept in their proper sphere, but which have a little too much of the freebooter to make a figure in a court of evidence."

"Well, then," said Craigenfelt, "will you believe Colonel Douglas Ashton, who heard the Marquis of A—say in a public circle, but not aware that he was within ear-shot, that his kinsman had made a better arrangement for himself than to give his father's land for the pale-checked daughter of a broken-down fanatic, and that Bucklaw was welcome to the wearing of Ravenswood's shaghaughed shoes?"

"Did he say so, by heavens!" cried Bucklaw, breaking out into one of those uncontrollable fits of passion to which he was constitutionally subject,—"if I had heard him, I would have torn the tongue out of his throat before all his pets and minions, and Highland bullies into the bargain. Why did not Ashton run him through the body?"

"Capote me if I know," said the Captain. "He deserved it, sure enough; but he is an old man, and a minister of state, and there would be more risk than credit in meddling with him. You had more need to think of making up to Lucy Ashton the disgrace that's like to fall upon her, than of interfering with a man too old to fight, and on too high a stool for your hand to reach him."

"It shall reach him, though, one day," said Bucklaw, "and his kinsman Ravenswood to boot. In the meantime, I'll take care Miss Ashton receives no discredit for the slight they have put upon her. It's an awkward job, however, and I wish it were ended; I scarce know how to talk to her,—but fill a bumper, Craigie, and we'll drink her health. It grows late, and a night-cowl of good claret is worth all the considering-caps in Europe."

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was the copy of our conference.
In bed she slept not, for my urging it;
At board she fed not, for my urging it;
Alone, it was the subject of my theme;
In company I often glared at it.

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

THE next morning saw Bucklaw, and his faithful Achates, Craigenfelt, at Ravenswood Castle. They were most courteously received by the knight and his lady, as well as by their son and heir, Colonel Ashton. After a good deal of stammering and blushing,—for Bucklaw, notwithstanding his audacity in other matters, had all the sheepish bashfulness common to those who have lived little in respectable society,—he contrived

at length to explain his wish to be admitted to a conference with Miss Ashton, upon the subject of their approaching union. Sir William and his son looked at Lady Ashton, who replied with the greatest composure, "that Lucy would wait upon Mr. Hayston directly. I hope," she added with a smile, "that as Lucy is very young, and has been lately trepanned into an engagement, of which she is now heartily ashamed, our dear Bucklaw will excuse her wish that I should be present at their interview."

"In truth, my dear lady," said Bucklaw, "it is the very thing that I would have desired on my own account; for I have been so little accustomed to what is called gallantry, that I shall certainly fall into some cursed mistake, unless I have the advantage of your ladyship as an interpreter."

It was thus that Bucklaw, in the perturbation of his embarrassment upon this critical occasion, forgot the just apprehensions he had entertained of Lady Ashton's overbearing ascendancy over her daughter's mind, and lost an opportunity of ascertaining, by his own investigation, the real state of Lucy's feelings.

The other gentlemen left the room, and, in a short time, Lady Ashton, followed by her daughter, entered the apartment. She appeared, as he had seen her on former occasions, rather composed than agitated; but a nicer judge than he could scarce have determined, whether her calmness was that of despair or of indifference. Bucklaw was too much agitated by his own feelings minutely to scrutinize those of the lady. He stammered out an unconnected address, confounding together the two or three topics to which it related, and stopt short before he brought it to any regular conclusion. Miss Ashton listened, or looked as if she listened, but returned not a single word in answer, continuing to fix her eyes on a small piece of embroidery, on which, as if by instinct or habit, her fingers were busily employed. Lady Ashton sat at some distance, almost screened from notice by the deep embrasure of the window in which she had placed her chair. From this she whispered, in a tone of voice, which, though soft and sweet, had something in it of admonition, if not command,—"Lucy, my dear, remember—have you heard what Bucklaw has been saying?"

The idea of her mother's presence seemed to have slipped from the unhappy girl's recollection. She started, dropped her needle, and repeated hastily, and almost in the same breath, the contradictory answers, "Yes, madam—no, my lady—I beg pardon, I did not hear."

"You need not blush, my love, and still less need you look so pale and frightened," said Lady Ashton, coming forward; "we know that maiden's ears must be slow in receiving a gentleman's language; but you must remember Mr. Hayston speaks on a subject on which you have long since agreed to give him a favorable hearing. You know how much your father and I have our hearts set upon an event so extremely desirable."

In Lady Ashton's voice, a tone of impressive

and even stern innuendo was sedulously and skillfully concealed, under an appearance of the most affectionate maternal tenderness. The manner was for Bucklaw, who was easily enough imposed upon; the matter of the exhortation was for the terrified Lucy, who well knew how to interpret her mother's hints, however skillfully their real purport might be veiled from general observation.

Miss Ashton sat upright in her chair, cast round her a glance, in which fear was mingled with a still wilder expression, but remained perfectly silent. Bucklaw, who had in the meantime paced the room to and fro, until he had recovered his composure, now stopped within two or three yards of her chair, and broke out as follows—"I believe I have been a d—d fool, Miss Ashton; I have tried to speak to you as people tell me young ladies like to be talked to, and I don't think you comprehend what I have been saying; and no wonder, for d—n me if I understand it myself! But, however, once for all, and in broad Scotch, your father and mother like what is proposed, and if you can take a plain young fellow for your husband, who will never cross you in anything you have a mind to, I will place you at the head of the best establishment in the three Lothians; you shall have Lady Girmington's lodging in the Canongate of Edinburgh, go where you please, do what you please, and see what you please, and that's fair. Only I must have a corner at the board-end for a worthless old play-fellow of mine, whose company I would rather want than have, if it were not that the d—d fellow has persuaded me that I can't do without him; and so I hope you won't except against Craigie, although it might be easy to find much better company."

"Now, out upon you, Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, again interposing,—"how can you think Lucy can have any objection to that blunt, honest, good-natured creature, Captain Craigenfelt?"

"Why, madam," replied Bucklaw, "as to Craigie's sincerity, honesty, and good-nature, they are, I believe, pretty much upon a par—but that's neither here nor there—the fellow knows my ways and has got useful to me, and I cannot well do without him, as I said before. But all this is nothing to the purpose; for since I have mustered up courage to make a plain proposal, I would fain hear Miss Ashton, from her own lips, give me a plain answer."

"My dear Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, "let me spare Lucy's bashfulness. I tell you in her presence, that she has already consented to be guided by her father and me in this matter.—Lucy, my love," she added with that singular combination of suavity of tone and pointed energy which we have already noticed—"Lucy, my dearest love I speak for yourself, is it not as I say?"

Her victim answered in a tremulous and hollow voice—"I have promised to obey you,—but upon one condition."

"She means," said Lady Ashton, turning to Bucklaw, "she expects an answer to the demand which she has made upon the man at Vienna, or