

Nothing is so natural as that Effie should have mentioned her condition to you—think—reflect—I am positive that she did."

"Wo's me!" said Jeanie, "she never spoke to me on the subject, but grat sorely when I spoke to her about her altered looks, and the change on her spirits."

"You asked her questions on the subject?" he said eagerly. "You *must* remember her answer was, a confession that she had been ruined by a villain—yes, lay a strong emphasis on that—a cruel false villain call it—any other name is unnecessary; and that she bore under her bosom the consequences of his guilt and her folly; and that he had assured her he would provide safely for her approaching illness.—Well he kept his word!" These last words he spoke as if it were to himself, and with a violent gesture of self-accusation, and then calmly proceeded, "You will remember all this?—That is all that is necessary to be said."

"But I cannot remember," answered Jeanie, with simplicity, "that which Effie never told me."

"Are you so dull—so very dull of apprehension?" he exclaimed, suddenly grasping her arm, and holding it firm in his hand. "I tell you" (speaking between his teeth, and under his breath, but with great energy), "you *must* remember that she told you all this, whether she ever said a syllable of it or no. You must repeat this tale, in which there is no falsehood, except in so far as it was not told to you, before these Justices—Justiciary—whatever they call their bloodthirsty court, and save your sister from being murdered, and them from becoming murderers. Do not hesitate—I pledge life and salvation, that in saying what I have said, you will only speak the simple truth."

"But," replied Jeanie, whose judgment was too accurate not to see the sophistry of this argument, "I shall be man-sworn in the very thing in which my testimony is wanted, for it is the concealment for which poor Effie is blamed, and you would make me tell a falsehood anent it."

"I see," he said, "my first suspicions of you were right, and that you will let your sister, innocent, fair, and guiltless, except in trusting a villain, die the death of a murderess, rather than bestow the breath of your mouth and the sound of your voice to save her."

"I wad ware the best blood in my body to keep her skaitless," said Jeanie, weeping in bitter agony, "but I canna change right into wrang, or make that true which is false."

"Foolish, hard-hearted girl," said the stranger, "are you afraid of what they may do to you? I tell you, even the retainers of the law, who course life as grey-hounds do hares, will rejoice at the escape of a creature so young—so beautiful; that they will not suspect your tale; that, if

of William and Mary, which is now replaced by another, imposing banishment in those circumstances in which the crime was formerly capital. This alteration took place in 1803.

they did suspect it, they would consider you as deserving, not only of forgiveness, but of praise for your natural affection."

"It is not man I fear," said Jeanie, looking upward; "the God, whose name I must call on to witness the truth of what I say, he will know the falsehood."

"And he will know the motive," said the stranger, eagerly; "he will know that you are doing this—not for lucre of gain, but to save the life of the innocent, and prevent the commission of a worse crime than that which the law seeks to avenge."

"He has given us a law," said Jeanie, "for the lamp of our path; if we stray from it we err against knowledge—I may not do evil, even that good may come out of it. But you—you that ken all this to be true, which I must take on your word—you that, if I understood what you said e'en now, promised her shelter and protection in her travail, why do not *you* step forward, and bear leal and soothfast evidence in her behalf, as ye may with a clear conscience?"

"To whom do you talk of a clear conscience, woman?" said he, with a sudden fierceness which renewed her terrors,—"to *me*?—I have not known one for many a year. Bear witness in her behalf?—a proper witness, that, even to speak these few words to a woman of so little consequence as yourself, must choose such an hour and such a place as this. When you see owls and bats fly abroad, like larks, in the sunshine, you may expect to see such as I am in the assemblies of men.—Hush—listen to that."

A voice was heard to sing one of those wild and monotonous strains so common in Scotland, and to which the natives of that country chant their old ballads. The sound ceased—then came nearer, and was renewed; the stranger listened attentively, still holding Jeanie by the arm (as she stood by him in motionless terror), as if to prevent her interrupting the strain by speaking or stirring. When the sounds were renewed, the words were distinctly audible:

"When the glede's in the blue cloud,
The lavrock lies still;
When the hound's in the green-wood,
The hind keeps the hill."

The person who sung kept a strained and powerful voice at its highest pitch, so that it could be heard at a very considerable distance. As the song ceased, they might hear a stifled sound, as of steps and whispers of persons approaching them. The song was again raised, but the tune was changed:

"O sleep ye sound, Sir James, she said,
When ye suld rise and ride;
There's twenty men, wi' bow and blade,
Are seeking where ye hide."

"I dare stay no longer," said the stranger, "return home, or remain till they come up—you have nothing to fear—but do not tell you saw me—your sister's fate is in your hands." So saying, he turned from her, and with a swift, yet cautious

ly noiseless step, plunged into the darkness on the side most remote from the sounds which they heard approaching, and was soon lost to her sight. Jeanie remained by the cairn, terrified beyond expression, and uncertain whether she ought to fly homeward with all the speed she could exert, or wait the approach of those who were advancing towards her. This uncertainty detained her so long, that she now distinctly saw two or three figures already so near to her, that a precipitate flight would have been equally fruitless and impolitic.

CHAPTER XVI.

—She speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense; her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up to fit their own thoughts.

HAMLET.

LIKE the digressive poet Ariosto, I find myself under the necessity of connecting the branches of my story, by taking up the adventures of another of the characters, and bringing them down to the point at which we have left those of Jeanie Deans. It is not, perhaps the most artificial way of telling a story, but it has the advantage of sparing the necessity of resuming what a knitter (if stocking looms have left such a person in the land) might call our "dropped stitches;" a labor in which the author generally toils much, without getting credit for his pains.

"I could risk a sma' wad," said the clerk to the magistrate, "that this rascal Ratcliffe, if he were insured of his neck's safety, could do more than any ten of our police-people and constables, to help us to get out of this scrape of Porteous's. He is weel acquaint wi' a' the smugglers, thieves, and banditti about Edinburgh; and, indeed, he may be called the father of a' the misdoers in Scotland, for he has passed among them for these twenty years by the name of Daddie Rat."

"A bonny sort of a scoundrel," replied the magistrate, "to expect a place under the city!"

"Begging your honor's pardon," said the city's procurator-fiscal, upon whom the duties of superintendent devolved, "Mr. Fairscrieve is perfectly in the right. It is just sic as Ratcliffe that the town needs in my department; an' if sae be that he's disposed to turn his knowledge to the city service, ye'll no find a better man.—Ye'll get nae saints to be searchers for uncustomed goods, or for thieves and sic like; and your decent sort of men, religious professors, and broken tradesmen, that are put into the like o' sic trust, can do nae gude ava. They are feared for this, and they are scrupulous about that, and they are na free to tell a lie, though it may be for the benefit of the city; and they dinna like to be out at irregular hours, and in a dark cauld night, and they like a clout ower the crown far waur; and sae between the fear o' God, and the fear o' man, and the fear o' getting a sair throat, or sair banes, there's a dozen o' our city-folk, baith waiters, and

officers, and constables, that can find out naething but a wee bit skulduggery for the benefit of the Kirk-treasurer. Jock Porteous, that's stiff and stark, puir fallow, was worth a dozen o' them; for he never had any fears, or scruples, or doubts, or conscience, about any thing your honors bade him."

"He was a gude servant o' the town," said the Bailie, "though he was an ower free-living man. But if you really think this rascal Ratcliffe could do us any service in discovering these malefactors, I would insure him life, reward, and promotion. It's an awsome thing this mischance for the city, Mr. Fairscrieve. It will be very ill taen wi' abune stairs. Queen Caroline, God bless her! is a woman—at least I judge sae, and it's nae treason to speak my mind sae far—and ye may be ken as weel as I do, for ye hae a housekeeper, though ye arena a married man, that women are wilfu' and downa bide a slight. And it will sound ill in her ears, that sic a confused mistake suld come to pass, and naebody sae muckle as to be put into the Tolbooth about it."

"If ye thought that, sir," said the procurator-fiscal, "we could easily clap into the prison a few blackguards upon suspicion. It will have a gude active look, and I hae aye plenty on my list, that wadna be a hair the waur of a week or twa's imprisonment; and if ye thought it no strictly just, ye could be just the easier wi' them the neist time they did any thing to deserve it; they arena the sort to be lang o' gieing ye an opportunity to clear scores wi' them on that account."

"I doubt that will hardly do in this case, Mr. Sharpitlaw," returned the town-clerk; "they'll run their letters,* and be adrift again, before ye ken where ye are."

"I will speak to the Lord Provost," said the magistrate, "about Ratcliffe's business. Mr. Sharpitlaw, you will go with me, and receive instructions—something may be made too out of this story of Butler's and his unknown gentleman—I know no business any man has to swagger about in the King's Park, and call himself the devil, to the terror of honest folks, who dinna care to hear mair about the devil than is said from the pulpit on the Sabbath. I cannot think the preacher himself wad be heading the mob, though the time has been, they hae been as forward in a bruilzie as their neighbors."

"But these times are lang by," said Mr. Sharpitlaw. "In my father's time, there was mair search for silenced ministers about the Bow-head and the Covenant-close, and all the tents of Kedar, as they ca'd the dwellings o' the godly in those days, than there's now for thieves and vagabonds in the Laigh Calton, and the back o' the Canongate. But that time's weel by, and it bide. And if the Bailie will get me directions and authority from the Provost, I'll speak wi' Daddie Rat mysel; for I'm thinking I'll make mair out o' him than ye'll do."

* A Scottish form of procedure, answering, in some respects to the English Habeas Corpus.

Mr. Sharpitlaw, being necessarily a man of high trust, was accordingly empowered, in the course of the day, to make such arrangements, as might seem in the emergency most advantageous for the Good Town. He went to the jail accordingly, and saw Ratcliffe in private.

The relative positions of a police-officer and a professed thief bear a different complexion, according to circumstances. The most obvious simile of a hawk pouncing upon his prey is often least applicable. Sometimes the guardian of justice has the air of a cat watching a mouse, and, while he suspends his purpose of springing upon the pilferer, takes care so to calculate his motions that he shall not get beyond his power. Sometimes, more passive still, he uses the art of fascination ascribed to the rattlesnake, and contents himself with glaring on the victim, through all his devious flutterings; certain that his terror, confusion, and disorder of ideas, will bring him into his jaws at last. The interview between Ratcliffe and Sharpitlaw had an aspect different from all these. They sat for five minutes silent, on opposite sides of a small table, and looked fixedly at each other, with a sharp, knowing, and alert cast of countenance, not unmingled with an inclination to laugh, and resembled, more than any thing else, two dogs, who, preparing for a game at romps, are seen to couch down, and remain in that posture for a little time, watching each other's movements, and waiting which shall begin the game.

"So, Mr. Ratcliffe," said the officer, conceiving it suited his dignity to speak first, "you give up business, I find?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ratcliffe; "I shall be on that lay nae mair—and I think that will save your folk some trouble, Mr. Sharpitlaw?"

"Which Jock Dalgleish" (then finisher of the law in the Scottish metropolis) "wad save them as easily," returned the procurator-fiscal.

"Ay; if I waited in the Tolbooth here to have him fit my cravat—but that's an idle way o' speaking, Mr. Sharpitlaw."

"Why, I suppose you know you are under sentence of death, Mr. Ratcliffe?" replied Mr. Sharpitlaw.

"Ay, so are a', as that worthy minister said in the Tolbooth Kirk the day Robertson wan off; but naebody kens when it will be executed. Gude faith, he had better reason to say sae than he dreamed of, before the play was played out that morning!"

"This Robertson," said Sharpitlaw, in a lower and something like a confidential tone, "d'ye ken, Rat—that is, can ye gie us ony inkling where he is to be heard tell o'?"

"Troth, Mr. Sharpitlaw, I'll be frank wi' ye; Robertson is rather a cut abone me—a wild deevil he was, and mony a daft prank he played; out except the Collector's job that Wilson led him into, and some tuiizies about run goods wi' the gaugers and the waiters, he never did ony thing that came near our line o' business."

"Umph! that's singular, considering the company he kept."

"Fact, upon my honor and credit," said Ratcliffe, gravely. "He kept out o' our little bits of affairs, and that's mair than Wilson did; I hae dune business wi' Wilson afore now. But the lad will come on in time; there's nae fear o' him; naebody will live the life he has led, but what he'll come to sooner or later."

"Who or what is he, Ratcliffe? you know, I suppose?" said Sharpitlaw.

"He's better born, I judge, than he cares to let on; he's been a soldier, and he has been a play-actor, and I watna what he has been or hasna been, for as young as he is, sae that it had dafting and nonsense about it."

"Pretty pranks he has played in his time, I suppose?"

"Ye may say that," said Ratcliffe, with a sardonic smile; "and" (touching his nose), "a deevil among the lasses."

"Like enough," said Sharpitlaw. "Weel, Ratcliffe, I'll no stand nifering wi' ye; ye ken the way that favor's gotten in my office; ye maun be usefu'."

"Certainly, sir, to the best of my power—neething for naething—I ken the rule of the office," said the ex-depredator.

"Now the principal thing in hand e'en now," said the official person, "is the job of Porteous's; and ye can gie us a lift—why, the inner turnkey's office to begin wi', and the captainship in time—ye understand my meaning?"

"Ay, troth do I, sir; a wink's as gude as a nod to a blind horse; but Jock Porteous's job—Lord help ye!—I was under sentence the haill time. God! but I couldna help laughing when I heard Jock skirling for mercy in the lads' hands. Mony a het skin ye hae gien me, neighbor, thought I, tak ye what's gaun: time about's fair play; ye'll ken now what hanging's gude for."

"Come, come, this is all nonsense, Rat," said the procurator. "Ye canna creep out at that hole, lad; you must speak to the point—you understand me—if you want favor; gif-gaf makes gude friends, ye ken."

"But how can I speak to the point, as your honor ca's it," said Ratcliffe, demurely, and with an air of great simplicity, "when ye ken I was under sentence, and in the strong room a' the while the job was going on?"

"And how can we turn ye loose on the public again, Daddie Rat, unless ye do or say something to deserve it?"

"Well, then, d—n it!" answered the criminal, "since it maun be sae, I saw Geordie Robertson among the boys that brake the jail; I suppose that will do me some gude?"

"That's speaking to the purpose, indeed," said the office-bearer; "and now, Rat, where think ye we'll find him?"

"Deil haet o' me kens," said Ratcliffe: "he'll no likely gang back to ony o' his auld nowf's; he'll be off the country by this time. He has

gude friends some gate or other, for a' the life he's ed; he's been weel educate."

"He'll grace the gallows the better," said Mr. Sharpitlaw; "a desperate dog, to murder an officer of the city for doing his duty! Wha kens wha's turn it might be next?—But you saw him plainly?"

"As plainly as I see you."

"How was he dressed?" said Sharpitlaw.

"I couldna weel see; something of a woman's bit mutch on his head; but ye never saw sic a ca'-throw. Ane couldna hae een to a' thing."

"But did he speak to no one?" said Sharpitlaw.

"They were a' speaking and gabbling through other," said Ratcliffe, who was obviously unwilling to carry his evidence farther than he could possibly help.

"This will not do, Ratcliffe," said the procurator; "you must speak *out-out-out*," tapping the table emphatically, as he repeated that impressive monosyllable.

"It's very hard, sir," said the prisoner; "and but for the under-turnkey's place—"

"And the reversion of the captaincy—the captaincy of the Tolbooth, man—that is, in case of gude behavior."

"Ay, ay," said Ratcliffe, "gude behavior!—there's the deevil. And then it's waiting for dead folk's shoon into the bargain."

"But Robertson's head will weigh something," said Sharpitlaw; "something gay and heavy, Rat; the town maun show cause—that's right and reason—and then ye'll hae freedom to enjoy your gear honestly."

"I dinna ken," said Ratcliffe; "it's a queer way of beginning the trade of honesty—but deil ma care. Weel, then, I heard and saw him speak to the wench Effie Deans, that's up there for child-murder."

"The deil ye did? Rat, this is finding a mare's nest wi' a witness.—And the man that spoke to Butler in the Park, and that was to meet wi' Jeanie Deans at Muschat's Cairn—whew! lay that and that together? As sure as I live he's been the father of the lassie's wean."

"There hae been waur guesses than that, I'm thinking," observed Ratcliffe, turning his quid of tobacco in his cheek, and squirting out the juice. "I heard something a while syne about his drawing up 'wi a bonny quean about the Pleasannts, and that it was a' Wilson could do to keep him frae marrying her."

Here a city officer entered, and told Sharpitlaw that they had the woman in custody whom he had directed them to bring before him.

"It's little matter now," said he, "the thing is taking another turn; however, George, ye may bring her in."

The officer retired, and introduced, upon his return, a tall, strapping wench of eighteen or twenty, dressed fantastically, in a sort of blue riding-jacket, with tarnished lace, her hair clubbed like that of a man, a Highland bonnet, and a

bunch of broken feathers, a riding-skirt (or petticoat) of scarlet camlet, embroidered with tarnished flowers. Her features were coarse and masculine, yet at a little distance, by dint of very bright wild-looking black eyes, an aquiline nose, and a commanding profile, appeared rather handsome. She flourished the switch she held in her hand, dropped a courtesy as low as a lady at a birth-night introduction, recovered herself seemingly according to Touchstone's directions to Audrey, and opened the conversation without waiting till any questions were asked.

"God gie your honor gude-e'en and mony o' them, bonny Mr. Sharpitlaw!—Gude-e'en to ye, Daddie Ratton—they tauld me ye were hanged, man; or did ye get out o' John Dalgleish's hands like half-hangit Maggie Dickson?"

"Whisht, ye daft jaund," said Ratcliffe, "and hear what's said to ye."

"Wi' a' my heart, Ratton. Great preferment for poor Madge to be brought up the street wi' a grand man, wi' a coat a' passemented wi' worst-lace, to speak wi' provosts, and bailies, and town-clerks, and prokitors, at this time o' day—and the haill town looking at me too—This is honor on earth for anes!"

"Ay, Madge," said Mr. Sharpitlaw, in a coaxing tone; "and ye're dressed out in your braws, I see; these are not your every days' claiths ye have on."

"Deil be in my fingers, then!" said Madge—"Eh, sirs!" (observing Butler come into the apartment), "there's a minister in the Tolbooth—wha will ca' it a graceless place now?—I'se warrant, he's in for the gude auld cause—but it's be nae cause o' mine," and off she went into a song.

"Hey for cavaliers, ho for cavaliers,
Dub a dub, dub a dub;
Have at old Beelzebub,—
Oliver's squeaking for fear."

"Did you ever see that mad woman before?" said Sharpitlaw to Butler.

"Not to my knowledge, sir," replied Butler.

"I thought as much," said the procurator-fiscal, looking towards Ratcliffe, who answered his glance with a nod of acquiescence and intelligence.

"But that is Madge Wildfire, as she calls herself," said the man of law to Butler.

"Ay, that I am," said Madge, "and that I have been ever since I was something better—Heigh ho!"—(and something like melancholy dwelt on her features for a minute)—"But I canna mind when that was—it was lang syne, at ony rate, and I'll ne'er fash my thumb about it.—"

I glance like the wildfire through country and town;
I'm seen on the causeway—I'm seen on the down;
The lightning that flashes so bright and so free,
Is scarcely so blithe or so bonny as me."

"Hand your tongue, ye skirling himmer!" said the officer, who had acted as master of the ceremonies to this extraordinary performer, and who was rather scandalized at the freedom of her

demeanor before a person of Mr. Sharpitlaw's importance—"hand your tongue, or I'll see ye something to skirl for!"

"Let her alone, George," said Sharpitlaw, "dinna put her out o' tune; I hae some questions to ask her.—But first, Mr. Butler, take another look of her."

"Do sae, minister—do sae," cried Madge; "I am as weel worth looking at as ony book in your aught.—And I can say the single carritch, and the double carritch, and justification and effectual calling, and the assembly of divines at Westminster, that is" (she added in a low tone), "I could say them ance—but it's langsyne—and ane forgets, ye ken." And poor Madge heaved another deep sigh.

"Weel, sir," said Mr. Sharpitlaw to Butler, "what think ye now?"

"As I did before," said Butler; "that I never saw the poor demented creature in my life before."

"Then she is not the person whom you said the rioters last night described as Madge Wildfire?"

"Certainly not," said Butler. "They may be near the same height, for they are both tall, but I see little other resemblance."

"Their dress, then, is not alike?" said Sharpitlaw.

"Not in the least," said Butler.

"Madge, my bonny woman," said Sharpitlaw, in the same coaxing manner, "what did ye do wi' your ilka-days' claihs yesterday?"

"I dinna mind," said Madge.

"Where was ye yesterday at e'en, Madge?"

"I dinna mind ony thing about yesterday," answered Madge; "ae day is enough for ony body to wun ower wi' at a time, and ower muckle sometimes."

"But may be, Madge, ye wad mind something about it if I was to gie ye this half-crown?" said Sharpitlaw, taking out the piece of money.

"That might gar me laugh, but it couldna gar me mind."

"But, Madge," continued Sharpitlaw, "were I to send you to the work-house in Leith Wynd, and gar Jock Dalgleish lay the tawse on your back—"

"That wad gar me greet," said Madge, sobbing, "but it couldna gar me mind, ye ken."

"She is ower far past reasonable folk's motives, sir," said Ratcliffe, "to mind siller, or John Dalgleish, or the cat-and-nine-tails, either; but I think I could gar her tell us something."

"Try her, then, Ratcliffe," said Sharpitlaw, "for I am tired of her crazy pate, and be d-d to her."

"Madge," said Ratcliffe, "hae ye ony joes now?"

"An ony body ask ye, say ye dinná ken.—Set him to be speaking of my joes, auld Daddie Ratton!"

"I dare say, ye hae deil ane?"

"See if I haena then," said Madge, with the toss of the head of affronted beauty—"there's Rob the Ranter, and Will Fleming, and then there's Geordie Robertson, lad—that's Gentleman Geordie—what think ye o' that?"

Ratcliffe laughed, and, winking to the procurator-fiscal, pursued the inquiry in his own way. "But, Madge, the lads only like ye when ye hae on your brows—they wadna touch you wi' a pair o' tangs when you are in your auld ilka-day rags."

"Ye're a leeing auld sorrow then," replied the fair one; "for Gentle Geordie Robertson put my ilka-day's claihs on his ain bonny sell yestreen, and gaed a' through the town wi' them; and gawsie and grand he lookit, like ony queen in the land."

"I dinna believe a word o't," said Ratcliffe, with another wink to the procurator. "Thae duds were a' o' the color o' moonshine in the water, I'm thinking, Madge—The gown wad be a sky-blue scarlet, I see warrant ye?"

"It was nae sic thing," said Madge, whose unretentive memory let out, in the eagerness of contradiction, all that she would have most wished to keep concealed, had her judgment been equal to her inclination. "It was neither scarlet nor sky-blue, but my ain auld brown threshe-coat of a short-gown, and my mother's auld mutch, and my red rokelay—and he gaed me a crown and a kiss for the use o' them, blessing on his bonny face—though it's been a dear ane to me."

"And where did he change his clothes again, hinnie?" said Sharpitlaw, in his most conciliatory manner.

"The procurator's spoiled a'," observed Ratcliffe, dryly.

And it was even so; for the question, put in so direct a shape, immediately awakened Madge to the propriety of being reserved upon those very topics on which Ratcliffe had indirectly seduced her to become communicative.

"What was't ye were speering at us, sir?" she resumed, with an appearance of stolidity so speedily assumed, as showed there was a good deal of knavery mixed with her folly.

"I asked you," said the procurator, "at what hour, and to what place, Robertson brought back your clothes."

"Robertson?—Lord haud a care o' us! what Robertson?"

"Why, the fellow we were speaking of, Gentle Geordie, as you call him."

"Geordie Gentle!" answered Madge, with well-feigned amazement—"I dinna ken naebody they ca' Geordie Gentle."

"Come, my jo," said Sharpitlaw, "this will not do; you must tell us what you did with these clothes of yours."

Madge Wildfire made no answer, unless the question may seem connected with the snatch of a song with which she indulged the embarrassed investigator:—

What did ye wi' the bridal ring—br'idal ring—br'idal ring?
What did ye wi' your wedding ring, ye little cutty quean, O!
I gied it till a sodger, a sodger, a sodger,
I gied it till a sodger, an auld true love o' mine, O."

Of all the madwomen who have sung and said, since the days of Hamlet the Dane, if Ophelia be the most affecting, Madge Wildfire was the most provoking.

The procurator-fiscal was in despair. "Ill take some measures with this d-d Bess of Bedlam," said he, "that shall make her find her tongue."

"Wi' your favor, sir," said Ratcliffe, "better let her mind settle a little—Ye have aye made out something."

"True," said the official person; "a brown short-gown, mutch, red rokelay—that agrees with your Madge Wildfire, Mr. Butler?" Butler agreed that it did so. "Yes, there was a sufficient motive for taking this crazy creature's dress and name, while he was about such a job."

"And I am free to say now," said Ratcliffe—"When you see it has come out without you," interrupted Sharpitlaw.

"Just sae, sir," reiterated Ratcliffe. "I am free to say now, since it's come out otherwise, that these were the clothes I saw Robertson wearing last night in the jail, when he was at the head of the rioters."

"That's direct evidence," said Sharpitlaw; "stick to that, Rat—I will report favorably of you to the provost, for I have business for you to-night. It wears late; I must home and get a snack, and I'll be back in the evening. Keep Madge with you, Ratcliffe, and try to get her into a good tune again." So saying he left the prison.

CHAPTER XVII.

And some they whistled—and some they sang,
And some did loudly say,
Whenever Lord Barnard's horn it blew,
"Away, Musgrave, away!"

BALLAD OF LITTLE MUSGRAVE.

WHEN the man of office returned to the Heart of Mid-Lothian, he resumed his conference with Ratcliffe, of whose experience and assistance he now held himself secure. "You must speak with this wench, Rat—this Effie Deans—you must sift her a wee bit; for as sure as a tether she will ken Robertson's haunts—till her, Rat—till her without delay."

"Craving your pardon, Mr. Sharpitlaw," said the turnkey elect, "that's what I am not free to do."

"Free to do, man? what the deil ails ye now?—I thought we had settled a' that?"

"I dinna ken, sir," said Ratcliffe; "I hae spoken to this Effie—she's strange to this place and to its ways, and to a' our ways, Mr. Sharpitlaw; and she greets, the silly tawpie, and she's breaking her heart already about this wild chield; and were she the means o' taking him, she wad break it outright."

"She wanna hae time, lad," said Sharpitlaw;

"the woodie will hae its ain o' her before that—a woman's heart takes a lang time o' breaking."

"That's according to the stuff they are made o', sir," replied Ratcliffe—"But to make a lang tale short, I canna undertake the job. It gangs against my conscience."

"Your conscience, Rat?" said Sharpitlaw, with a sneer, which the reader will probably think very natural upon the occasion.

"Ou, ay, sir," answered Ratcliffe, calmly, "just my conscience; a'body has a conscience, though it may be ill wunnin at it. I think mine's as weel out o' the gate as maist folk's are; and yet its just like the noop of my elbow, it whiles gets a bit dirl on a corner."

"Weel, Rat," replied Sharpitlaw, "since ye are nice, I'll speak to the hussy myself."

Sharpitlaw, accordingly, caused himself to be introduced into the little dark apartment tenanted by the unfortunate Effie Deans. The poor girl was seated on her little flock-bed, plunged in a deep reverie. Some food stood on the table, of a quality better than is usually supplied to prisoners, but it was untouched. The person under whose care she was more particularly placed said, "that sometimes she tasted naething from the tae end of the four-and-twenty hours to the t'other, except a drink of water."

Sharpitlaw took a chair, and, commanding the turnkey to retire, he opened the conversation, endeavoring to throw into his tone and countenance as much commiseration as they were capable of expressing, for the one was sharp and harsh, the other sly, acute, and selfish.

"How's a' wi' ye, Effie?—How d'ye find yourself, hinnie?"

A deep sigh was the only answer.

"Are the folk civil to ye, Effie?—it's my duty to inquire."

"Very civil, sir," said Effie, compelling herself to answer, yet hardly knowing what she said.

"And your victuals," continued Sharpitlaw, in the same condoling tone—"do you get what you like?—or is there ony thing you would particularly fancy, as your health seems but silly?"

"It's a' very weel, sir, I thank ye," said the poor prisoner, in a tone how different from the sportive vivacity of the Lily of St. Leonard's!—"it's a' very gude—ower gude for me."

"He must have been a great villain, Effie, who brought you to this pass," said Sharpitlaw.

The remark was dictated partly by a natural feeling, of which even he could not divest himself, though accustomed to practise on the passions of others, and keep a most heedful guard over his own, and partly by his wish to introduce the sort of conversation which might best serve his immediate purpose. Indeed, upon the present occasion, these mixed motives of feeling and cunning harmonized together wonderfully; for said Sharpitlaw to himself, the greater rogue Robertson is, the more will be the merit of bring-

ling him to justice. "He must have been a great villain, indeed," he again reiterated; "and I wish I had the skelping o' him."

"I may blame myself mair than him," said Effie; "I was bred up to ken better; but he, poor fellow"—(she stopped).

"Was a thorough blackguard a' his life, I dare say," said Sharpitlaw. "A stranger he was in this country, and a companion of that lawless vagabond, Wilson, I think, Effie?"

"It wad hae been dearly telling him that he had ne'er seen Wilson's face."

"That's very true that you are saying, Effie," said Sharpitlaw. "Where was't that Robertson and you were used to howf' thegither? Somegait about the Laigh Calton, I am thinking."

The simple and dispirited girl had thus far followed Mr. Sharpitlaw's lead, because he had artfully adjusted his observations to the thoughts he was pretty certain must be passing through her own mind, so that her answers became a kind of thinking aloud, a mood into which those who are either constitutionally absent in mind, or are rendered so by the temporary pressure of misfortune, may be easily led by a skillful train of suggestions. But the last observation of the procurator-fiscal was too much of the nature of a direct interrogatory, and it broke the charm accordingly.

"What was it that I was saying?" said Effie, starting up from her reclining posture, seating herself upright, and hastily shading her dishevelled hair back from her wasted but still beautiful countenance. She fixed her eyes boldly and keenly upon Sharpitlaw. "You are too much of a gentleman, sir—too much of an honest man, to take any notice of what a poor creature like me says, that can hardly ca' my senses my ain—God help me!"

"Advantage!—I would be of some advantage to you if I could," said Sharpitlaw, in a soothing tone; "and I ken naething sae likely to serve ye, Effie, as gripping this rascal, Robertson."

"O dinna misca' him, sir, that never misca'd you!—Robertson?—I am sure I had naething to say against ony man o' the name, and naething will I say."

"But if you do not heed your own misfortune, Effie, you should mind what distress he has brought on your family," said the man of law.

"O, Heaven help me!" exclaimed poor Effie—"My poor father—my dear Jeanie—O, that's sairest to bide of a'! O, sir, if ye hae ony kindness—if ye hae ony touch of compassion—for a' the folk I see here are as hard as the wa'-stones—If ye wad but bid them let my sister Jeanie in the next time she ca's! for when I hear them put her awa frae the door, and canna climb up to that high window to see sae muckle as her gown-tail, it's like to pit me out o' my judgment." And she looked on him with a face of entreaty so earnest, yet so humble, that she fairly shook the steadfast purpose of his mind.

"You shall see your sister," he began, "if

you'll tell me,"—then interrupting himself, he added, in a more hurried tone,—"no, d—n it, you shall see your sister whether you tell me anything or no." So saying, he rose up and left the apartment.

When he had rejoined Ratcliffe, he observed, "You are right, Ratton; there's no making much of that lassie. But ae thing I have cleared—that is, that Robertson has been the father of the bairn, and so I will wager a boddle that it will be he that's to meet wi' Jeanie Deans this night at Muschat's Cairn, and there we'll nail him, Rat, or my name is not Gideon Sharpitlaw."

"But," said Ratcliffe, perhaps because he was in no hurry to see anything which was like to be connected with the discovery and apprehension of Robertson, "an that were the case, Mr. Butler wad hae kend the man in the King's Park to be the same person wi' him in Madge Wildfire's claiaths, that headed the mob."

"That makes nae difference, man," replied Sharpitlaw—"the dress, the light, the confusion, and maybe a touch o' a blackit cork, or a shake o' paint—hont, Ratton, I have seen ye dress your ainself, that the deevil ye belang to durstna hae made oath t'ye."

"And that's true, too," said Ratcliffe.

"And besides, ye donnard carle," continued Sharpitlaw, triumphantly, "the minister *did* say that he thought he knew something of the features of the birkie that spoke to him in the Park, though he could not charge his memory where or when he had seen them."

"It's evident, then, your honor will be right," said Ratcliffe.

"Then, Rat, you and I will go with the party ourselves this night, and see him in grips, or we are done wi' him."

"I seema muckle use I can be o' to your honor," said Ratcliffe, reluctantly.

"Use?" answered Sharpitlaw—"You can guide the party—you ken the ground. Besides, I do not intend to quit sight o' you, my good friend, till I have him in hand."

"Weel, sir," said Ratcliffe, but in no joyful tone of acquiescence; "ye maun hae it your ain way—but mind he's a desperate man."

"We shall have that with us," answered Sharpitlaw, "that will settle him, if it is necessary."

"But, sir," answered Ratcliffe, "I am sure I couldna undertake to guide you to Muschat's Cairn in the night-time; I ken the place, as mony does, in fair day-light, but how to find it by moonshine, among sae mony crags and stanes, as like to each other as the collier to the deil, is mair than I can tell. I might as soon seek moonshine in water."

"What's the meaning o' this, Ratcliffe?" said Sharpitlaw, while he fixed his eye on the recusant with a fatal and ominous expression.—"Have you forgotten that you are still under sentence of death?"

"No, sir," said Ratcliffe, "that's a thing no easily put out o' memory; and if my presence be judged necessary, nae doubt I maun gang wi' your honor. But I was gain to tell your honor of aye that has mair skeel o' the gate than me, and that's e'en Madge Wildfire."

"The devil she has!—Do you think me as mad as she is, to trust to her guidance on such an occasion?"

"Your honor is the best judge," answered Ratcliffe; "but I ken I can keep her in tune, and gar her hand the straight path—she often sleeps out, or rambles among thae hills the hail simmer night, the daft limmer."

"Weel, Ratcliffe," replied the procurator-fiscal, "if you think she can guide us the right way—but take heed to what you are about—your life depends on your behavior."

"It's a sair judgment on a man," said Ratcliffe, "when he has ance gane so far wrang as I hae done, that deil a bit he can be honest, try't whilk way he will."

Such was the reflection of Ratcliffe, when he was left for a few minutes to himself, while the retainer of justice went to procure a proper warrant, and give the necessary directions.

The rising moon saw the whole party free from the walls of the city, and entering upon the open ground. Arthur's Seat, like a couchant lion of immense size—Salisbury Crags, like a huge belt or girdle of granite, were dimly visible. Holding their path along the southern side of the Canon-gate, they gained the Abbey of Holyroodhouse, and from thence found their way by step and stile into the King's Park. They were at first four in number—an officer of justice and Sharpitlaw, who were well armed with pistols and cutlasses; Ratcliffe, who was not trusted with weapons, lest he might, peradventure, have used them on the wrong side; and the female. But at the last stile, when they entered the Chase, they were joined by other two officers, whom Sharpitlaw, desirous to secure sufficient force for his purpose, and at the same time to avoid observation, had directed to wait for him at this place. Ratcliffe saw this accession of strength with some disquietude, for he had hitherto thought it likely that Robertson, who was a bold, stout, and active young fellow, might have made his escape from Sharpitlaw and the single officer, by force or agility, without his being implicated in the matter. But the present strength of the followers of justice was overpowering, and the only mode of saving Robertson (which the old sinner was well disposed to do, providing always he could accomplish his purpose without compromising his own safety), must be by contriving that he should have some signal of their approach. It was probably with this view that Ratcliffe had requested the addition of Madge to the party, having considerable confidence in her propensity to exert her lungs. Indeed, she had already given them so many specimens of her clamorous loquacity, that Sharpitlaw half determined to send her back with one of the officers,

rather than carry forward in his company a person so extremely ill qualified to be a guide in a secret expedition. It seemed, too, as if the open air, the approach to the hills, and the ascent of the moon, supposed to be so portentous over those whose brain is infirm, made her spirits rise in a degree tenfold more loquacious than she had hitherto exhibited. To silence her by fair means seemed impossible; authoritative commands and coaxing entreaties she set alike at defiance, and threats only made her sulky and altogether intractable.

"Is there no one of you," said Sharpitlaw, impatiently, "that knows the way to this accursed place—this Nichol Muschat's Cairn—except this mad clavering idiot?"

"Deil ane o' them kens it, except myself," exclaimed Madge; "how suld they, the pure fule cowards! But I hae sat on the grave frae bat-fleeing time till cock-crow, and had mony a fine crack wi' Muschat and Allie Muschat, that are lying sleeping below."

"The devil take your crazy brain," said Sharpitlaw; "will you not allow the men to answer a question?"

The officers obtaining a moment's audience while Ratcliffe diverted Madge's attention, declared that, though they had a general knowledge of the spot, they could not undertake to guide the party to it by the uncertain light of the moon, with such accuracy as to ensure success to their expedition.

"What shall we do, Ratcliffe?" said Sharpitlaw; "if he sees us before we see him,—and that's what he is certain to do, if we go strolling about, without keeping the straight road,—we may bid gude-day to the job; and I would rather lose one hundred pounds, baith for the credit of the police, and because the Provost says somebody maun be hanged for this job of Porteous, come o't what likes."

"I think," said Ratcliffe, "we maun just try Madge; and I'll see if I can get her keepit in ony better order. And at ony rate, if he suld hear her skirling her auld ends o' sangs, he's no to ken for that that there's ony body wi' her."

"That's true," said Sharpitlaw; "and if he thinks her alone, he's as like to come towards her as to rin frae her. So set forward—we hae lost ower muckle time already—see to get her to keep the right road."

"And what sort o' house does Nichol Muschat and his wife keep now?" said Ratcliffe to the madwoman, by way of humoring her vein of folly; "they were but thrawn folk lang syne, an a' tales be true."

"Ou, ay, ay, ay—but a's forgotten now," replied Madge, in the confidential tone of a gossip giving the history of her next-door neighbor—"Ye see, I spoke to them mysel, and tauld them byganes suld be byganes—her throat's sair misguggled and masherkered though; she wears her corpse-sheet drawn weel up to hide it, but that canna hinder the bluid selping through, ye ken

I wussed to her wash it in St. Anthony's Well, and that will cleanse if anything can—But they say bluid never bleaches out o' linen claiht—Deacon Sanders's new cleansing draps winna do't—I tried them mysell on a bit rag we hae at hame that was mailed w' the bluid of a bit skirling wean that was hurt some gate, but out it winna come—Weel, ye'll say that's queer; but I will bring it out to St. Anthony's blessed Well some brow night just like this, and I'll cry up Allie Muschat, and she and I will hae a grand bouking-washing, and bleach our claihts in the beams of the bonny Lady Moon, that's far pleasanter to me than the sun—the sun's ower het, and ken ye, cummers, my brains are het enough already. But the moon, and the dew, and the night-wind, they are just like a callar kailblade laid on my brow; and whiles I think the moon just shines on purpose to pleasure me, when nabody sees her but mysell."

This raving discourse she continued with prodigious volubility, walking on at a great pace, and dragging Ratcliffe along with her, while he endeavored, in appearance at least, if not in reality, to induce her to moderate her voice.

All at once, she stopped short upon the top of a little hillock, gazed upward fixedly, and said not one word for the space of five minutes. "What the devil is the matter with her now?" said Sharpitlaw to Ratcliffe—"Can you not get her forward?"

"Ye maun just take a grain o' patience w' her, sir," said Ratcliffe. "She'll no gae a foot faster than she likes hersell."

"D—n her," said Sharpitlaw, "I'll take care she has her time in Bedlam or Bridewell, or both, for she's both mad and mischievous."

In the meanwhile, Madge, who had looked very pensive when she first stopped, suddenly burst into a vehement fit of laughter, then paused and sighed bitterly,—then was seized with a second fit of laughter—then, fixing her eyes on the moon, lifted up her voice and sung,—

"Good-even, good fair moon, good-even to thee;
I prithee, dear moon, now show to me
The form and the features, the speech and degree,
Of the man that true lover of mine shall be.

But I need not ask that of the bonny Lady Moon—I ken that weel enough mysell—true-love though he wasna—But nabody shall see that I ever tauld a word about the matter—But whiles I wish the bairn had lived—Weel, God guide us, there's a heaven aboon us a'—(here she sighed bitterly), "and a bonny moon, and sterna in it forby" (and here she laughed once more).

"Are we to stand here all night?" said Sharpitlaw, very impatiently. "Drag her forward."

"Ay, sir," said Ratcliffe, "if we kend whilk way to drag her, that would settle it at ance.—Come, Madge, hinny," addressing her, "we'll no be in time to see Nichol and his wife, unless ye show us the road."

"In troth and that I will, Ratton," said she, seizing him by the arm, and resuming her route

with huge strides, considering it was a female who took them. "And I'll tell ye, Ratton, blithe will Nichol Muschat be to see ye, for he says he kens weel there isna sic a villain out o' hell as ye are, and he wad be ravished to hae a crack w' you—like to like, ye ken—it's a proverb never fails—and ye are baith a pair o' the devil's peats I trow—hard to ken whilk deserves the hettest corner o' his ingleside."

Ratcliffe was conscience-struck, and could not forbear making an involuntary protest against this classification. "I never shed blood," he replied.

"But ye hae sauld it, Ratton—ye hae sauld blood mony a time. Folk kill w' the tongue as weel as w' the hand—w' the word as weel as w' the gully!"

It is the bonny butcher lad,
That wears the sleeves of blue,
He sells the flesh on Saturday,
On Friday that he slew."

"And what is that I am doing now?" thought Ratcliffe. "But I'll hae nae wyte of Robertson's young bluid, if I can help it;" then speaking apart to Madge, he asked her, "Whether she did not remember ony o' her auld sangs?"

"Mony a dainty ane," said Madge; "and blithely can I sing them, for lightsome sangs make merry gate." And she sang,—

"When the glade's in the blue cloud,
The lavrock lies still;
When the bound's in the green-wood,
The hind keeps the hill."

"Silence her cursed noise, if you should throtle her," said Sharpitlaw; "I see somebody yonder.—Keep close, my boys, and creep round the shoulder of the height. George Poinder, stay you with Ratcliffe and that mad yelling bitch; and you other two, come with me round under the shadow of the brae."

And he crept forward with the stealthy pace of an Indian savage, who leads his band to surprise an unsuspecting party of some hostile tribe. Ratcliffe saw them glide off, avoiding the moonlight, and keeping as much in the shade as possible. "Robertson's done up," said he to himself; "these young lads are aye sae thoughtless. What devil could he hae to say to Jeanie Deans, or to ony woman on earth, that he suld gang awa and get his neck raxed for her? And this mad quean, after cracking like a pen-gun, and skirling like a pea-hen for the hail night, behaves just to hae hadden her tongue when her clavers might have done some gude! But it's aye the way w' women; if they ever haud their tongues awa', ye may swear it's for mischief. I wish I could set her on again without this blood-sucker kenning what I am doing. But he's as gleg as MacKeachan's elshin, that ran through sax plies of bendleather and half an inch into the king's heel."

He then began to hum, but in a very low and suppressed tone, the first stanza of a favorite ballad of Wildfire's, the words of which bore some distant analogy with the situation of Robertson

trusting that the power of association would not fail to bring the rest to her mind:

"There's a bloodhound ranging Tinwald wood,
There's harness glancing shoon:
There's a maiden sits on Tinwald brae,
And she sings loud between."

Madge had no sooner received the catch-word, than she vindicated Ratcliffe's sagacity by setting off at score with the song:—

"O sleep ye sound, Sir James, she said,
When ye suld rise and ride!
There's twenty men, w' bow and blade,
Are seeking where ye hide."

Though Ratcliffe was at a considerable distance from the spot called Muschat's Cairn, yet his eyes, practised like those of a cat to penetrate darkness, could mark that Robertson had caught the alarm. George Poinder, less keen of sight, or less attentive, was not aware of his flight any more than Sharpitlaw and his assistants, whose view, though they were considerably nearer to the cairn, was intercepted by the broken nature of the ground under which they were screening themselves. At length, however, after the interval of five or six minutes, they also perceived that Robertson had fled, and rushed hastily towards the place, while Sharpitlaw called out aloud, in the harsh tones of a voice which resembled a saw-mill at work, "Chase, lads—chase—haud the brae—I see him on the edge of the hill!" Then hollowing back to the rear guard of his detachment, he issued his farther orders: "Ratcliffe, come here, and detain the woman—George, run and keep the stile at the Duke's Walk—Ratcliffe, come here directly—but first knock out that mad bitch's brains!"

"Ye had better rin for it, Madge," said Ratcliffe, "for it's ill dealing w' an angry man."

Madge Wildfire was not so absolutely void of common sense as not to understand this innuendo; and while Ratcliffe, in seemingly anxious haste of obedience, hastened to the spot where Sharpitlaw waited to deliver up Jeanie Deans to his custody, she fled with all the despatch she could exert in an opposite direction. Thus the whole party were separated, and in rapid motion of flight or pursuit, excepting Ratcliffe and Jeanie, whom, although making no attempt to escape, he held fast by the cloak, and who remained standing by Muschat's Cairn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

You have paid the heavens your function, and the prisoner the very debt of your calling.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

JEANIE DEANS,—for here our story unites itself with that part of the narrative which broke off at the end of the fifteenth chapter,—while she waited, in terror and amazement, the hasty advance of three or four men towards her, was yet more startled at their suddenly breaking asunder, and giving chase in different directions to the late object of her terror, who became at that moment, though she could not well assign a reasonable

cause, rather the cause of her interest. One of the party (it was Sharpitlaw) came straight up to her, and saying, "Your name is Jeanie Deans, and you are my prisoner," immediately added, "but if you will tell me which way he ran I will let you go."

"I dinna ken, sir," was all the poor girl could utter; and, indeed, it is the phrase which rises most readily to the lips of any person in her rank, as the readiest reply to any embarrassing question.

"But," said Sharpitlaw, "ye ken wha it was ye were speaking w'! my leddy, on the hill side, and midnight sae near; ye surely ken that, my bonny woman?"

"I dinna ken, sir," again iterated Jeanie, who really did not comprehend in her terror the nature of the questions which were so hastily put to her in this moment of surprise.

"We will try to mend your memory by and by, hinny," said sharpitlaw, and shouted, as we have already told the reader, to Ratcliffe, to come up and take charge of her, while he himself directed the chase after Robertson, which he still hoped might be successful. As Ratcliffe approached, Sharpitlaw pushed the young woman towards him with some rudeness, and betaking himself to the more important object of his quest, began to scale crags and scramble up steep banks, with an agility of which his profession and his general gravity of demeanor would previously have argued him incapable. In a few minutes there was no one within sight, and only a distant halloo from one of the pursuers to the other, faintly heard on the side of the hill, argued that there was any one within hearing. Jeanie Deans was left in the clear moonlight, standing under the guard of a person of whom she knew nothing, and, what was worse, concerning whom, as the reader is well aware, she could have learned nothing that would not have increased her terror.

When all in the distance was silent, Ratcliffe for the first time addressed her, and it was in that cold, sarcastic, indifferent tone familiar to habitual depravity, whose crimes are instigated by custom rather than by passion. "This is a brow night for ye, dearie," he said, attempting to pass his arm across her shoulder, "to be on the green hill w' your jo." Jeanie extricated herself from his grasp, but did not make any reply. "I think lads and lasses," continued the ruffian, "dinna meet at Muschat's Cairn at midnight to crack nuts," and he again attempted to take hold of her.

"If ye are an officer of justice, sir," said Jeanie, again eluding his attempt to seize her, "ye deserve to have your coat stripped from your back."

"Very true, hinny," said he, succeeding forcibly in his attempt to get hold of her, "but suppose I should strip your cloak off first?"

"Ye are more a man, I am sure, than to hurt me, sir," said Jeanie; "for God's sake have pity on a half-distracted creature!"