

for movement, air, and the open country.

CHAPTER VII--I MAKE A FAULT IN HONOUR

I came forth, I vow I know not how, on the Lang Dykes {12}. This

is a rural road which runs on the north side over against the city.

Thence I could see the whole black length of it tail down, from

where the castle stands upon its crags above the loch in a long

line of spires and gable ends, and smoking chimneys, and at the

sight my heart swelled in my bosom. My youth, as I have told, was

already inured to dangers; but such danger as I had seen the face

of but that morning, in the midst of what they call the safety of a

town, shook me beyond experience. Peril of slavery, peril of

shipwreck, peril of sword and shot, I had stood all of these

without discredit; but the peril there was in the sharp voice and

the fat face of Simon, property Lord Lovat, daunted me wholly.

I sat by the lake side in a place where the rushes went down into the water, and there steeped my wrists and laved my temples. If I could have done so with any remains of self-esteem, I would now have fled from my foolhardy enterprise. But (call it courage or cowardice, and I believe it was both the one and the other) I decided I was ventured out beyond the possibility of a retreat. I had out-faced these men, I would continue to out-face them; come what might, I would stand by the word spoken.

The sense of my own constancy somewhat uplifted my spirits, but not much. At the best of it there was an icy place about my heart, and life seemed a black business to be at all engaged in. For two souls in particular my pity flowed. The one was myself, to be so

friendless and lost among dangers. The other was the girl, the daughter of James More. I had seen but little of her; yet my view was taken and my judgment made. I thought her a lass of a clean honour, like a man's; I thought her one to die of a disgrace; and now I believed her father to be at that moment bargaining his vile life for mine. It made a bond in my thoughts betwixt the girl and me. I had seen her before only as a wayside appearance, though one that pleased me strangely; I saw her now in a sudden nearness of relation, as the daughter of my blood foe, and I might say, my murderer. I reflected it was hard I should be so plagued and persecuted all my days for other folks' affairs, and have no manner of pleasure myself. I got meals and a bed to sleep in when my concerns would suffer it; beyond that my wealth was of no help to me. If I was to hang, my days were like to be short; if I was not

to hang but to escape out of this trouble, they might yet seem long to me ere I was done with them. Of a sudden her face appeared in my memory, the way I had first seen it, with the parted lips; at that, weakness came in my bosom and strength into my legs; and I set resolutely forward on the way to Dean. If I was to hang tomorrow, and it was sure enough I might very likely sleep that night in a dungeon, I determined I should hear and speak once more with Catriona.

The exercise of walking and the thought of my destination braced me yet more, so that I began to pluck up a kind of spirit. In the village of Dean, where it sits in the bottom of a glen beside the river, I inquired my way of a miller's man, who sent me up the hill upon the farther side by a plain path, and so to a decent-like

small house in a garden of lawns and apple-trees. My heart beat high as I stepped inside the garden hedge, but it fell low indeed when I came face to face with a grim and fierce old lady, walking there in a white mutch with a man's hat strapped upon the top of it.

"What do ye come seeking here?" she asked.

I told her I was after Miss Drummond.

"And what may be your business with Miss Drummond?" says she.

I told her I had met her on Saturday last, had been so fortunate as to render her a trifling service, and was come now on the young

lady's invitation.

"O, so you're Saxpence!" she cried, with a very sneering manner.

"A braw gift, a bonny gentleman. And hae ye ony ither name and designation, or were ye bapteesed Saxpence?" she asked.

I told my name.

"Preserve me!" she cried. "Has Ebenezer gotten a son?"

"No, ma'am," said I. "I am a son of Alexander's. It's I that am the Laird of Shaws."

"Ye'll find your work cut out for ye to establish that," quoth she.

"I perceive you know my uncle," said I; "and I daresay you may be the better pleased to hear that business is arranged."

"And what brings ye here after Miss Drummond?" she pursued.

"I'm come after my saxpence, mem," said I. "It's to be thought, being my uncle's nephew, I would be found a careful lad."

"So ye have a spark of sleeness in ye?" observed the old lady, with some approval. "I thought ye had just been a cuif--you and your saxpence, and your LUCKY DAY and your SAKE OF BALWHIDDER"--from which I was gratified to learn that Catriona had not forgotten some of our talk. "But all this is by the purpose," she resumed. "Am I

to understand that ye come here keeping company?"

"This is surely rather an early question," said I. "The maid is young, so am I, worse fortune. I have but seen her the once. I'll not deny," I added, making up my mind to try her with some frankness, "I'll not deny but she has run in my head a good deal since I met in with her. That is one thing; but it would be quite another, and I think I would look very like a fool, to commit myself."

"You can speak out of your mouth, I see," said the old lady.

"Praise God, and so can I! I was fool enough to take charge of this rogue's daughter: a fine charge I have gotten; but it's mine, and I'll carry it the way I want to. Do ye mean to tell me, Mr.

Balfour of Shaws, that you would marry James More's daughter, and him hanged! Well, then, where there's no possible marriage there shall be no manner of carryings on, and take that for said. Lasses are bruckle things," she added, with a nod; "and though ye would never think it by my wrinkled chafts, I was a lassie mysel', and a bonny one."

"Lady Allardyce," said I, "for that I suppose to be your name, you seem to do the two sides of the talking, which is a very poor manner to come to an agreement. You give me rather a home thrust when you ask if I would marry, at the gallow's foot, a young lady whom I have seen but once. I have told you already I would never be so untenty as to commit myself. And yet I'll go some way with you. If I continue to like the lass as well as I have reason to

expect, it will be something more than her father, or the gallows
either, that keeps the two of us apart. As for my family, I found
it by the wayside like a lost bawbee! I owe less than nothing to
my uncle and if ever I marry, it will be to please one person:
that's myself."

"I have heard this kind of talk before ye were born," said Mrs.

Ogilvy, "which is perhaps the reason that I think of it so little.

There's much to be considered. This James More is a kinsman of

mine, to my shame be it spoken. But the better the family, the

mair men hanged or headed, that's always been poor Scotland's

story. And if it was just the hanging! For my part I think I

would be best pleased with James upon the gallows, which would be

at least an end to him. Catrine's a good lass enough, and a good-

hearted, and lets herself be deaved all day with a runt of an auld
wife like me. But, ye see, there's the weak bit. She's daft about
that long, false, fleeching beggar of a father of hers, and red-mad
about the Gregara, and proscribed names, and King James, and a
when blethers. And you might think ye could guide her, ye would
find yourself sore mista'en. Ye say ye've seen her but the once. .
."

"Spoke with her but the once, I should have said," I interrupted.

"I saw her again this morning from a window at Prestongrange's."

This I daresay I put in because it sounded well; but I was properly
paid for my ostentation on the return.

"What's this of it?" cries the old lady, with a sudden pucker of her face. "I think it was at the Advocate's door-cheek that ye met her first."

I told her that was so.

"H'm," she said; and then suddenly, upon rather a scolding tone, "I have your bare word for it," she cries, "as to who and what you are. By your way of it, you're Balfour of the Shaws; but for what I ken you may be Balfour of the Deevil's oxters. It's possible ye may come here for what ye say, and it's equally possible ye may come here for deil care what! I'm good enough Whig to sit quiet, and to have keepit all my men-folk's heads upon their shoulders. But I'm not just a good enough Whig to be made a fool of neither."

And I tell you fairly, there's too much Advocate's door and
Advocate's window here for a man that comes taigling after a
Macgregor's daughter. Ye can tell that to the Advocate that sent
ye, with my fond love. And I kiss my loof to ye, Mr. Balfour,"
says she, suiting the action to the word; "and a braw journey to ye
back to where ye cam frae."

"If you think me a spy," I broke out, and speech stuck in my
throat. I stood and looked murder at the old lady for a space,
then bowed and turned away.

"Here! Hoots! The callant's in a creel!" she cried. "Think ye a
spy? what else would I think ye--me that kens naething by ye? But
I see that I was wrong; and as I cannot fight, I'll have to

apologise. A bonny figure I would be with a broadsword. Ay! ay!"

she went on, "you're none such a bad lad in your way; I think ye'll have some redeeming vices. But, O! Davit Balfour, ye're damned countryfeed. Ye'll have to win over that, lad; ye'll have to soople your back-bone, and think a wee pickle less of your dainty self; and ye'll have to try to find out that women-folk are nae grenadiers. But that can never be. To your last day you'll ken no more of women-folk than what I do of sow-gelding."

I had never been used with such expressions from a lady's tongue, the only two ladies I had known, Mrs. Campbell and my mother, being most devout and most particular women; and I suppose my amazement must have been depicted in my countenance, for Mrs. Ogilvy burst forth suddenly in a fit of laughter.

"Keep me!" she cried, struggling with her mirth, "you have the finest timber face--and you to marry the daughter of a Hieland cateran! Davie, my dear, I think we'll have to make a match of it--if it was just to see the weans. And now," she went on, "there's no manner of service in your daidling here, for the young woman is from home, and it's my fear that the old woman is no suitable companion for your father's son. Forbye that I have nobody but myself to look after my reputation, and have been long enough alone with a sedoective youth. And come back another day for your saxpence!" she cried after me as I left.

My skirmish with this disconcerting lady gave my thoughts a boldness they had otherwise wanted. For two days the image of

Catriona had mixed in all my meditations; she made their

background, so that I scarce enjoyed my own company without a glint

of her in a corner of my mind. But now she came immediately near;

I seemed to touch her, whom I had never touched but the once; I let

myself flow out to her in a happy weakness, and looking all about,

and before and behind, saw the world like an undesirable desert,

where men go as soldiers on a march, following their duty with what

constancy they have, and Catriona alone there to offer me some

pleasure of my days. I wondered at myself that I could dwell on

such considerations in that time of my peril and disgrace; and when

I remembered my youth I was ashamed. I had my studies to complete:

I had to be called into some useful business; I had yet to take my

part of service in a place where all must serve; I had yet to

learn, and know, and prove myself a man; and I had so much sense as

blush that I should be already tempted with these further-on and holier delights and duties. My education spoke home to me sharply; I was never brought up on sugar biscuits but on the hard food of the truth. I knew that he was quite unfit to be a husband who was not prepared to be a father also; and for a boy like me to play the father was a mere derision.

When I was in the midst of these thoughts and about half-way back to town I saw a figure coming to meet me, and the trouble of my heart was heightened. It seemed I had everything in the world to say to her, but nothing to say first; and remembering how tongue-tied I had been that morning at the Advocate's I made sure that I would find myself struck dumb. But when she came up my fears fled away; not even the consciousness of what I had been privately

thinking disconcerted me the least; and I found I could talk with her as easily and rationally as I might with Alan.

"O!" she cried, "you have been seeking your sixpence; did you get it?"

I told her no; but now I had met with her my walk was not in vain.

"Though I have seen you to-day already," said I, and told her where and when.

"I did not see you," she said. "My eyes are big, but there are better than mine at seeing far. Only I heard singing in the house."

"That was Miss Grant," said I, "the eldest and the bonniest."

"They say they are all beautiful," said she.

"They think the same of you, Miss Drummond," I replied, "and were all crowding to the window to observe you."

"It is a pity about my being so blind," said she, "or I might have seen them too. And you were in the house? You must have been having the fine time with the fine music and the pretty ladies."

"There is just where you are wrong," said I; "for I was as uncouth as a sea-fish upon the brae of a mountain. The truth is that I am better fitted to go about with rudas men than pretty ladies."

"Well, I would think so too, at all events!" said she, at which we
both of us laughed.

"It is a strange thing, now," said I. "I am not the least afraid
with you, yet I could have run from the Miss Grants. And I was
afraid of your cousin too."

"O, I think any man will be afraid of her," she cried. "My father
is afraid of her himself."

The name of her father brought me to a stop. I looked at her as
she walked by my side; I recalled the man, and the little I knew
and the much I guessed of him; and comparing the one with the

other, felt like a traitor to be silent.

"Speaking of which," said I, "I met your father no later than this morning."

"Did you?" she cried, with a voice of joy that seemed to mock at me. "You saw James More? You will have spoken with him then?"

"I did even that," said I.

Then I think things went the worst way for me that was humanly possible. She gave me a look of mere gratitude. "Ah, thank you for that!" says she.

"You thank me for very little," said I, and then stopped. But it seemed when I was holding back so much, something at least had to come out. "I spoke rather ill to him," said I; "I did not like him very much; I spoke him rather ill, and he was angry."

"I think you had little to do then, and less to tell it to his daughter!" she cried out. "But those that do not love and cherish him I will not know."

"I will take the freedom of a word yet," said I, beginning to tremble. "Perhaps neither your father nor I are in the best of spirits at Prestongrange's. I daresay we both have anxious business there, for it's a dangerous house. I was sorry for him too, and spoke to him the first, if I could but have spoken the

wiser. And for one thing, in my opinion, you will soon find that

his affairs are mending."

"It will not be through your friendship, I am thinking," said she;

"and he is much made up to you for your sorrow."

"Miss Drummond," cried I, "I am alone in this world."

"And I am not wondering at that," said she.

"O, let me speak!" said I. "I will speak but the once, and then

leave you, if you will, for ever. I came this day in the hopes of

a kind word that I am sore in want of. I know that what I said

must hurt you, and I knew it then. It would have been easy to have

spoken smooth, easy to lie to you; can you not think how I was
tempted to the same? Cannot you see the truth of my heart shine
out?"

"I think here is a great deal of work, Mr. Balfour," said she. "I
think we will have met but the once, and will can part like gentle
folk."

"O, let me have one to believe in me!" I pleaded, "I cannae bear it
else. The whole world is clanned against me. How am I to go
through with my dreadful fate? If there's to be none to believe in
me I cannot do it. The man must just die, for I cannot do it."

She had still looked straight in front of her, head in air; but at

my words or the tone of my voice she came to a stop. "What is this
you say?" she asked. "What are you talking of?"

"It is my testimony which may save an innocent life," said I, "and
they will not suffer me to bear it. What would you do yourself?"

You know what this is, whose father lies in danger. Would you
desert the poor soul? They have tried all ways with me. They have
sought to bribe me; they offered me hills and valleys. And to-day
that sleuth-hound told me how I stood, and to what a length he
would go to butcher and disgrace me. I am to be brought in a party
to the murder; I am to have held Glenure in talk for money and old
clothes; I am to be killed and shamed. If this is the way I am to
fall, and me scarce a man--if this is the story to be told of me in
all Scotland--if you are to believe it too, and my name is to be

nothing but a by-word--Catriona, how can I go through with it? The

thing's not possible; it's more than a man has in his heart."

I poured my words out in a whirl, one upon the other; and when I

stopped I found her gazing on me with a startled face.

"Glenure! It is the Appin murder," she said softly, but with a

very deep surprise.

I had turned back to bear her company, and we were now come near

the head of the brae above Dean village. At this word I stepped in

front of her like one suddenly distracted.

"For God's sake!" I cried, "for God's sake, what is this that I

have done?" and carried my fists to my temples. "What made me do

it? Sure, I am bewitched to say these things!"

"In the name of heaven, what ails you now!" she cried.

"I gave my honour," I groaned, "I gave my honour and now I have

broke it. O, Catriona!"

"I am asking you what it is," she said; "was it these things you

should not have spoken? And do you think I have no honour, then?

or that I am one that would betray a friend? I hold up my right

hand to you and swear."

"O, I knew you would be true!" said I. "It's me--it's here. I

that stood but this morning and out-faced them, that risked rather

to die disgraced upon the gallows than do wrong--and a few hours

after I throw my honour away by the roadside in common talk!

'There is one thing clear upon our interview,' says he, 'that I can

rely on your pledged word.' Where is my word now? Who could

believe me now? You could not believe me. I am clean fallen down;

I had best die!" All this I said with a weeping voice, but I had

no tears in my body.

"My heart is sore for you," said she, "but be sure you are too

nice. I would not believe you, do you say? I would trust you with

anything. And these men? I would not be thinking of them! Men

who go about to entrap and to destroy you! Fy! this is no time to

crouch. Look up! Do you not think I will be admiring you like a

great hero of the good--and you a boy not much older than myself?

And because you said a word too much in a friend's ear, that would

die ere she betrayed you--to make such a matter! It is one thing

that we must both forget."

"Catriona," said I, looking at her, hang-dog, "is this true of it?

Would ye trust me yet?"

"Will you not believe the tears upon my face?" she cried. "It is

the world I am thinking of you, Mr. David Balfour. Let them hang

you; I will never forget, I will grow old and still remember you.

I think it is great to die so: I will envy you that gallows."

"And maybe all this while I am but a child frightened with bogles,"

said I. "Maybe they but make a mock of me."

"It is what I must know," she said. "I must hear the whole. The harm is done at all events, and I must hear the whole."

I had sat down on the wayside, where she took a place beside me, and I told her all that matter much as I have written it, my thoughts about her father's dealings being alone omitted.

"Well," she said, when I had finished, "you are a hero, surely, and I never would have thought that same! And I think you are in peril, too. O, Simon Fraser! to think upon that man! For his life and the dirty money, to be dealing in such traffic!" And just then she called out aloud with a queer word that was common with her,

and belongs, I believe, to her own language. "My torture!" says

she, "look at the sun!"

Indeed, it was already dipping towards the mountains.

She bid me come again soon, gave me her hand, and left me in a

turmoil of glad spirits. I delayed to go home to my lodging, for I

had a terror of immediate arrest; but got some supper at a change

house, and the better part of that night walked by myself in the

barley-fields, and had such a sense of Catriona's presence that I

seemed to bear her in my arms.