

## CHAPTER XIX--I AM MUCH IN THE HANDS OF THE LADIES

The copying was a weary business, the more so as I perceived very early there was no sort of urgency in the matters treated, and began very early to consider my employment a pretext. I had no sooner finished than I got to horse, used what remained of daylight to the best purpose, and being at last fairly benighted, slept in a house by Almond-Water side. I was in the saddle again before the day, and the Edinburgh booths were just opening when I clattered in by the West Bow and drew up a smoking horse at my lord Advocate's door. I had a written word for Doig, my lord's private hand that was thought to be in all his secrets--a worthy little plain man, all fat and snuff and self-sufficiency. Him I found already at his desk and already bedabbled with maccabaw, in the same anteroom

where I rencountered with James More. He read the note

scrupulously through like a chapter in his Bible.

"H'm," says he; "ye come a wee thing ahint-hand, Mr. Balfour. The

bird's flaen--we hae letten her out."

"Miss Drummond is set free?" I cried.

"Achy!" said he. "What would we keep her for, ye ken? To hae made

a steer about the bairn would has pleased naebody."

"And where'll she be now?" says I.

"Gude kens!" says Doig, with a shrug.

"She'll have gone home to Lady Allardyce, I'm thinking," said I.

"That'll be it," said he.

"Then I'll gang there straight," says I.

"But ye'll be for a bite or ye go?" said he.

"Neither bite nor sup," said I. "I had a good wauch of milk in by

Ratho."

"Aweel, aweel," says Doig. "But ye'll can leave your horse here

and your bags, for it seems we're to have your up-put."

"Na, na", said I. "Tamson's mear {17} would never be the thing for  
me this day of all days."

Doig speaking somewhat broad, I had been led by imitation into an  
accent much more countrified than I was usually careful to affect a  
good deal broader, indeed, than I have written it down; and I was  
the more ashamed when another voice joined in behind me with a  
scrap of a ballad:

"Gae saddle me the bonny black,

Gae saddle sune and mak' him ready

For I will down the Gatehope-slack,

And a' to see my bonny leddy."

The young lady, when I turned to her, stood in a morning gown, and

her hands muffled in the same, as if to hold me at a distance. Yet

I could not but think there was kindness in the eye with which she

saw me.

"My best respects to you, Mistress Grant," said I, bowing.

"The like to yourself, Mr. David," she replied with a deep

courtesy. "And I beg to remind you of an old musty saw, that meat

and mass never hindered man. The mass I cannot afford you, for we

are all good Protestants. But the meat I press on your attention.

And I would not wonder but I could find something for your private

ear that would be worth the stopping for."

"Mistress Grant," said I, "I believe I am already your debtor for

some merry words--and I think they were kind too--on a piece of

unsigned paper."

"Unsigned paper?" says she, and made a droll face, which was

likewise wondrous beautiful, as of one trying to remember.

"Or else I am the more deceived," I went on. "But to be sure, we

shall have the time to speak of these, since your father is so good

as to make me for a while your inmate; and the GOMERAL begs you at

this time only for the favour of his liberty,"

"You give yourself hard names," said she.

"Mr. Doig and I would be blythe to take harder at your clever pen,"

says I.

"Once more I have to admire the discretion of all men-folk," she

replied. "But if you will not eat, off with you at once; you will

be back the sooner, for you go on a fool's errand. Off with you,

Mr. David," she continued, opening the door.

"He has lowpen on his bonny grey,

He rade the richt gate and the ready

I trow he would neither stint nor stay,

For he was seeking his bonny leddy."

I did not wait to be twice bidden, and did justice to Miss Grant's  
citation on the way to Dean.

Old Lady Allardyce walked there alone in the garden, in her hat and  
mutch, and having a silver-mounted staff of some black wood to lean  
upon. As I alighted from my horse, and drew near to her with  
CONGEES, I could see the blood come in her face, and her head fling  
into the air like what I had conceived of empresses.

"What brings you to my poor door?" she cried, speaking high through



her nose. "I cannot bar it. The males of my house are dead and buried; I have neither son nor husband to stand in the gate for me; any beggar can pluck me by the baird {18}--and a baird there is, and that's the worst of it yet?" she added partly to herself.

I was extremely put out at this reception, and the last remark, which seemed like a daft wife's, left me near hand speechless.

"I see I have fallen under your displeasure, ma'am," said I. "Yet I will still be so bold as ask after Mistress Drummond."

She considered me with a burning eye, her lips pressed close together into twenty creases, her hand shaking on her staff. "This cows all!" she cried. "Ye come to me to speir for her? Would God

I knew!"

"She is not here?" I cried.

She threw up her chin and made a step and a cry at me, so that I  
fell back incontinent.

"Out upon your leeing throat!" she cried. "What! ye come and speir  
at me! She's in jyle, whaur ye took her to--that's all there is to  
it. And of a' the beings ever I beheld in breeks, to think it  
should be to you! Ye timmer scoun'rel, if I had a male left to my  
name I would have your jaicket dustit till ye raired."

I thought it not good to delay longer in that place, because I

remarked her passion to be rising. As I turned to the horse-post she even followed me; and I make no shame to confess that I rode away with the one stirrup on and scrambling for the other.

As I knew no other quarter where I could push my inquiries, there was nothing left me but to return to the Advocate's. I was well received by the four ladies, who were now in company together, and must give the news of Prestongrange and what word went in the west country, at the most inordinate length and with great weariness to myself; while all the time that young lady, with whom I so much desired to be alone again, observed me quizzically and seemed to find pleasure in the sight of my impatience. At last, after I had endured a meal with them, and was come very near the point of appealing for an interview before her aunt, she went and stood by

the music-case, and picking out a tune, sang to it on a high key--

"He that will not when he may, When he will he shall have nay."

But this was the end of her rigours, and presently, after making

some excuse of which I have no mind, she carried me away in private

to her father's library. I should not fail to say she was dressed

to the nines, and appeared extraordinary handsome.

"Now, Mr. David, sit ye down here and let us have a two-handed

crack," said she. "For I have much to tell you, and it appears

besides that I have been grossly unjust to your good taste."

"In what manner, Mistress Grant?" I asked. "I trust I have never

seemed to fail in due respect."

"I will be your surety, Mr, David," said she. "Your respect,

whether to yourself or your poor neighbours, has been always and

most fortunately beyond imitation. But that is by the question.

You got a note from me?" she asked.

"I was so bold as to suppose so upon inference," said I, "and it

was kindly thought upon."

"It must have prodigiously surprised you," said she. "But let us

begin with the beginning. You have not perhaps forgot a day when

you were so kind as to escort three very tedious misses to Hope

Park? I have the less cause to forget it myself, because you was

so particular obliging as to introduce me to some of the principles

of the Latin grammar, a thing which wrote itself profoundly on my

gratitude."

"I fear I was sadly pedantical," said I, overcome with confusion at the memory. "You are only to consider I am quite unused with the society of ladies."

"I will say the less about the grammar then," she replied. "But how came you to desert your charge? 'He has thrown her out, overboard, his ain dear Annie!'" she hummed; "and his ain dear Annie and her two sisters had to taigle home by theirselves like a string of green geese! It seems you returned to my papa's, where you showed yourself excessively martial, and then on to realms unknown, with an eye (it appears) to the Bass Rock; solan geese being perhaps more to your mind than bonny lasses."

Through all this raillery there was something indulgent in the lady's eye which made me suppose there might be better coming.

"You take a pleasure to torment me," said I, "and I make a very feckless plaything; but let me ask you to be more merciful. At this time there is but the one thing that I care to hear of, and that will be news of Catriona."

"Do you call her by that name to her face, Mr. Balfour?" she asked.

"In troth, and I am not very sure," I stammered.

"I would not do so in any case to strangers," said Miss Grant.

"And why are you so much immersed in the affairs of this young lady?"

"I heard she was in prison," said I.

"Well, and now you hear that she is out of it," she replied, "and what more would you have? She has no need of any further champion."

"I may have the greater need of her, ma'am," said I.

"Come, this is better!" says Miss Grant. "But look me fairly in the face; am I not bonnier than she?"



"I would be the last to be denying it," said I. "There is not your

marrow in all Scotland."

"Well, here you have the pick of the two at your hand, and must

needs speak of the other," said she. "This is never the way to

please the ladies, Mr. Balfour."

"But, mistress," said I, "there are surely other things besides

mere beauty."

"By which I am to understand that I am no better than I should be,

perhaps?" she asked.

"By which you will please understand that I am like the cock in the

midden in the fable book," said I. "I see the braw jewel--and I

like fine to see it too--but I have more need of the pickle corn."

"Bravissimo!" she cried. "There is a word well said at last, and I

will reward you for it with my story. That same night of your

desertion I came late from a friend's house--where I was

excessively admired, whatever you may think of it--and what should

I hear but that a lass in a tartan screen desired to speak with me?

She had been there an hour or better, said the servant-lass, and

she grat in to herself as she sat waiting. I went to her direct;

she rose as I came in, and I knew her at a look. 'Grey Eyes!' says

I to myself, but was more wise than to let on. YOU WILL BE MISS

GRANT AT LAST? she says, rising and looking at me hard and pitiful.

AY, IT WAS TRUE HE SAID, YOU ARE BONNY AT ALL EVENTS.--THE WAY GOD

MADE ME, MY DEAR, I said, BUT I WOULD BE GEY AND OBLIGED IF YOU

COULD TELL ME WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE AT SUCH A TIME OF THE NIGHT.-

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LADY, she said, WE ARE KINSFOLK, WE ARE BOTH COME OF THE BLOOD OF

THE SONS OF ALPIN.--MY DEAR, I replied, I THINK NO MORE OF ALPIN OR

HIS SONS THAN WHAT I DO OF A KALESTOCK. YOU HAVE A BETTER  
ARGUMENT

IN THESE TEARS UPON YOUR BONNY FACE. And at that I was so weak-

minded as to kiss her, which is what you would like to do dearly,

and I wager will never find the courage of. I say it was weak-

minded of me, for I knew no more of her than the outside; but it

was the wisest stroke I could have hit upon. She is a very

staunch, brave nature, but I think she has been little used with

tenderness; and at that caress (though to say the truth, it was but

lightly given) her heart went out to me. I will never betray the

secrets of my sex, Mr. Davie; I will never tell you the way she  
turned me round her thumb, because it is the same she will use to  
twist yourself. Ay, it is a fine lass! She is as clean as hill  
well water."

"She is e'en't!" I cried.

"Well, then, she told me her concerns," pursued Miss Grant, "and in  
what a swither she was in about her papa, and what a taking about  
yourself, with very little cause, and in what a perplexity she had  
found herself after you was gone away. AND THEN I MINDED AT LONG  
LAST, says she, THAT WE WERE KINSWOMEN, AND THAT MR. DAVID SHOULD  
HAVE GIVEN YOU THE NAME OF THE BONNIEST OF THE BONNY, AND I WAS  
THINKING TO MYSELF 'IF SHE IS SO BONNY SHE WILL BE GOOD AT ALL

EVENTS'; AND I TOOK UP MY FOOT SOLES OUT OF THAT. That was when I

forgave yourself, Mr. Davie. When you was in my society, you

seemed upon hot iron: by all marks, if ever I saw a young man that

wanted to be gone, it was yourself, and I and my two sisters were

the ladies you were so desirous to be gone from; and now it

appeared you had given me some notice in the by-going, and was so

kind as to comment on my attractions! From that hour you may date

our friendship, and I began to think with tenderness upon the Latin

grammar."

"You will have many hours to rally me in," said I; "and I think

besides you do yourself injustice. I think it was Catriona turned

your heart in my direction. She is too simple to perceive as you

do the stiffness of her friend."

"I would not like to wager upon that, Mr. David," said she. "The  
lasses have clear eyes. But at least she is your friend entirely,  
as I was to see. I carried her in to his lordship my papa; and his  
Advocacy being in a favourable stage of claret, was so good as to  
receive the pair of us. HERE IS GREY EYES THAT YOU HAVE BEEN  
DEAVED WITH THESE DAYS PAST, said I, SHE IS COME TO PROVE THAT WE  
SPOKE TRUE, AND I LAY THE PRETTIEST LASS IN THE THREE LOTHIAN AT  
YOUR FEET--making a papistical reservation of myself. She suited  
her action to my words: down she went upon her knees to him--I  
would not like to swear but he saw two of her, which doubtless made  
her appeal the more irresistible, for you are all a pack of  
Mahomedans--told him what had passed that night, and how she had  
withheld her father's man from following of you, and what a case

she was in about her father, and what a flutter for yourself; and begged with weeping for the lives of both of you (neither of which was in the slightest danger), till I vow I was proud of my sex because it was done so pretty, and ashamed for it because of the smallness of the occasion. She had not gone far, I assure you, before the Advocate was wholly sober, to see his inmost politics ravelled out by a young lass and discovered to the most unruly of his daughters. But we took him in hand, the pair of us, and brought that matter straight. Properly managed--and that means managed by me--there is no one to compare with my papa."

"He has been a good man to me," said I.

"Well, he was a good man to Katrine, and I was there to see to it,"

said she.

"And she pled for me?" say I.

"She did that, and very movingly," said Miss Grant. "I would not like to tell you what she said--I find you vain enough already."

"God reward her for it!" cried I.

"With Mr. David Balfour, I suppose?" says she.

"You do me too much injustice at the last!" I cried. "I would tremble to think of her in such hard hands. Do you think I would presume, because she begged my life? She would do that for a new



whelped puppy! I have had more than that to set me up, if you but  
ken'd. She kissed that hand of mine. Ay, but she did. And why?  
because she thought I was playing a brave part and might be going  
to my death. It was not for my sake--but I need not be telling  
that to you, that cannot look at me without laughter. It was for  
the love of what she thought was bravery. I believe there is none  
but me and poor Prince Charlie had that honour done them. Was this  
not to make a god of me? and do you not think my heart would quake  
when I remember it?"

"I do laugh at you a good deal, and a good deal more than is quite  
civil," said she; "but I will tell you one thing: if you speak to  
her like that, you have some glimmerings of a chance."

"Me?" I cried, "I would never dare. I can speak to you, Miss

Grant, because it's a matter of indifference what ye think of me.

But her? no fear!" said I.

"I think you have the largest feet in all broad Scotland," says

she.

"Troth they are no very small," said I, looking down.

"Ah, poor Catriona!" cries Miss Grant.

And I could but stare upon her; for though I now see very well what

she was driving at (and perhaps some justification for the same), I

was never swift at the uptake in such flimsy talk.

"Ah well, Mr. David," she said, "it goes sore against my conscience, but I see I shall have to be your speaking board. She shall know you came to her straight upon the news of her imprisonment; she shall know you would not pause to eat; and of our conversation she shall hear just so much as I think convenient for a maid of her age and inexperience. Believe me, you will be in that way much better served than you could serve yourself, for I will keep the big feet out of the platter."

"You know where she is, then?" I exclaimed.

"That I do, Mr. David, and will never tell," said she.

"Why that?" I asked.

"Well," she said, "I am a good friend, as you will soon discover;

and the chief of those that I am friend to is my papa. I assure

you, you will never heat nor melt me out of that, so you may spare

me your sheep's eyes; and adieu to your David-Balfourship for the

now."

"But there is yet one thing more," I cried. "There is one thing

that must be stopped, being mere ruin to herself, and to me too."

"Well," she said, "be brief; I have spent half the day on you

already."

"My Lady Allardyce believes," I began--"she supposes--she thinks

that I abducted her."

The colour came into Miss Grant's face, so that at first I was

quite abashed to find her ear so delicate, till I bethought me she

was struggling rather with mirth, a notion in which I was

altogether confirmed by the shaking of her voice as she replied -

"I will take up the defence of your reputation," she said. "You

may leave it in my hands."

And with that she withdrew out of the library.