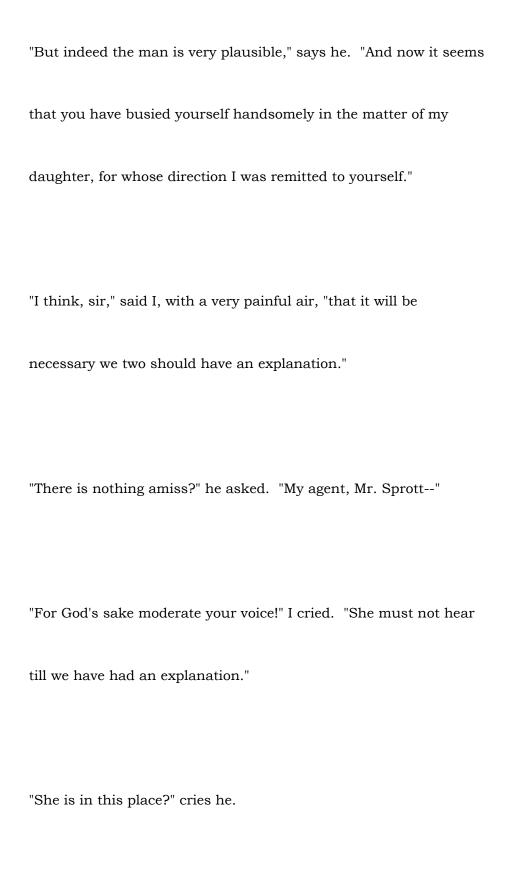
## CHAPTER XXV--THE RETURN OF JAMES MORE

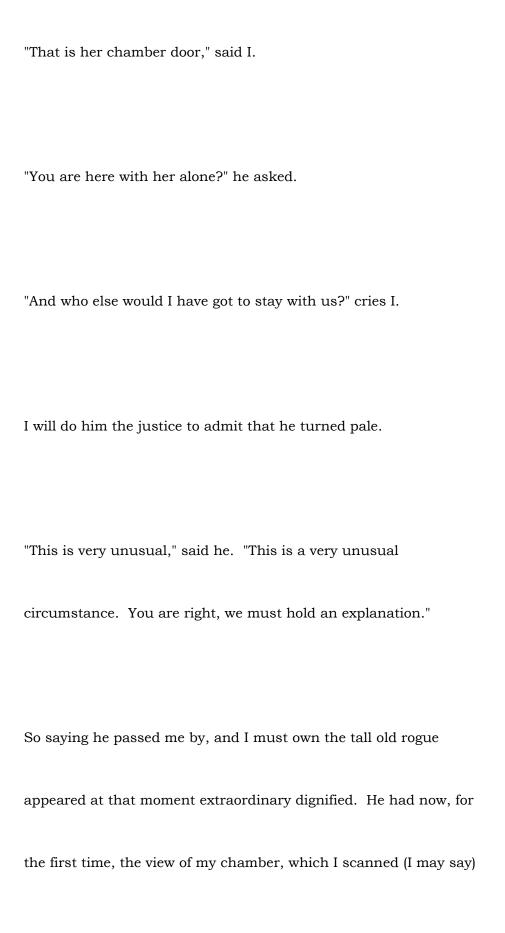
I was called on the morrow out of a late and troubled slumber by a knocking on my door, ran to open it, and had almost swooned with the contrariety of my feelings, mostly painful; for on the threshold, in a rough wraprascal and an extraordinary big laced hat, there stood James More.

I ought to have been glad perhaps without admixture, for there was a sense in which the man came like an answer to prayer. I had been saying till my head was weary that Catriona and I must separate, and looking till my head ached for any possible means of separation. Here were the means come to me upon two legs, and joy was the hindmost of my thoughts. It is to be considered, however,

that even if the weight of the future were lifted off me by the man's arrival, the present heaved up the more black and menacing; so that, as I first stood before him in my shirt and breeches, I believe I took a leaping step backward like a person shot.

"Ah," said he, "I have found you, Mr, Balfour." And offered me his large, fine hand, the which (recovering at the same time my post in the doorway, as if with some thought of resistance) I took him by doubtfully. "It is a remarkable circumstance how our affairs appear to intermingle," he continued. "I am owing you an apology for an unfortunate intrusion upon yours, which I suffered myself to be entrapped into by my confidence in that false-face,





with his eyes. A bit of morning sun glinted in by the window pane, and showed it off; my bed, my mails, and washing dish, with some disorder of my clothes, and the unlighted chimney, made the only plenishing; no mistake but it looked bare and cold, and the most unsuitable, beggarly place conceivable to harbour a young lady. At the same time came in on my mind the recollection of the clothes that I had bought for her; and I thought this contrast of poverty and prodigality bore an ill appearance.

He looked all about the chamber for a seat, and finding nothing else to his purpose except my bed, took a place upon the side of it; where, after I had closed the door, I could not very well avoid joining him. For however this extraordinary interview might end, it must pass if possible without waking Catriona; and the one thing

needful was that we should sit close and talk low. But I can
scarce picture what a pair we made; he in his great coat which the
coldness of my chamber made extremely suitable; I shivering in my
shirt and breeks; he with very much the air of a judge; and I
(whatever I looked) with very much the feelings of a man who has
heard the last trumpet.
"Well?" says he.
And "Well," I began, but found myself unable to go further.
"You tell me she is here?" said he again, but now with a spice of

impatience that seemed to brace me up.

"She is in this house," said I, "and I knew the circumstance would be called unusual. But you are to consider how very unusual the whole business was from the beginning. Here is a young lady landed on the coast of Europe with two shillings and a penny halfpenny. She is directed to you man Sprott in Helvoet. I hear you call him your agent. All I can say is he could do nothing but damn and swear at the mere mention of your name, and I must fee him out of my own pocket even to receive the custody of her effects. You speak of unusual circumstances, Mr. Drummond, if that be the name you prefer. Here was a circumstance, if you like, to which it was

"But this is what I cannot understand the least," said James. "My daughter was placed into the charge of some responsible persons,

barbarity to have exposed her."

whose names I have forgot." "Gebbie was the name," said I; "and there is no doubt that Mr. Gebbie should have gone ashore with her at Helvoet. But he did not, Mr. Drummond; and I think you might praise God that I was there to offer in his place."

"I shall have a word to say to Mr. Gebbie before long," said he.

"As for yourself, I think it might have occurred that you were somewhat young for such a post."

"But the choice was not between me and somebody else, it was between me and nobody," cried I. "Nobody offered in my place, and I must say I think you show a very small degree of gratitude to me that did."

"I shall wait until I understand my obligation a little more in the particular," says he.

"Indeed, and I think it stares you in the face, then," said I.

"Your child was deserted, she was clean flung away in the midst of

Europe, with scarce two shillings, and not two words of any

language spoken there: I must say, a bonny business! I brought

her to this place. I gave her the name and the tenderness due to a

sister. All this has not gone without expense, but that I scarce

need to hint at. They were services due to the young lady's

character which I respect; and I think it would be a bonny business

too, if I was to be singing her praises to her father."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You are a young man," he began.

"So I hear you tell me," said I, with a good deal of heat.

"You are a very young man," he repeated, "or you would have understood the significancy of the step."

"I think you speak very much at your ease," cried I. "What else was I to do? It is a fact I might have hired some decent, poor woman to be a third to us, and I declare I never thought of it until this moment! But where was I to find her, that am a foreigner myself? And let me point out to your observation, Mr.

Drummond, that it would have cost me money out of my pocket. For here is just what it comes to, that I had to pay through the nose for your neglect; and there is only the one story to it, just that

you were so unloving and so careless as to have lost your daughter."

"He that lives in a glass house should not be casting stones," says
he; "and we will finish inquiring into the behaviour of Miss

Drummond before we go on to sit in judgment on her father."

"But I will be entrapped into no such attitude," said I. "The character of Miss Drummond is far above inquiry, as her father ought to know. So is mine, and I am telling you that. There are but the two ways of it open. The one is to express your thanks to me as one gentleman to another, and to say no more. The other (if you are so difficult as to be still dissatisfied) is to pay me, that which I have expended and be done."

He seemed to soothe me with a hand in the air. "There, there," said he. "You go too fast, you go too fast, Mr. Balfour. It is a good thing that I have learned to be more patient. And I believe you forget that I have yet to see my daughter."

I began to be a little relieved upon this speech and a change in the man's manner that I spied in him as soon as the name of money fell between us.

"I was thinking it would be more fit--if you will excuse the plainness of my dressing in your presence--that I should go forth and leave you to encounter her alone?" said I.

"What I would have looked for at your hands!" says he; and there was no mistake but what he said it civilly.

I thought this better and better still, and as I began to pull on my hose, recalling the man's impudent mendicancy at Prestongrange's, I determined to pursue what seemed to be my victory.

"If you have any mind to stay some while in Leyden," said I, "this room is very much at your disposal, and I can easy find another for myself: in which way we shall have the least amount of flitting possible, there being only one to change."

"Why, sir," said he, making his bosom big, "I think no shame of a

poverty I have come by in the service of my king; I make no secret that my affairs are quite involved; and for the moment, it would be even impossible for me to undertake a journey."

"Until you have occasion to communicate with your friends," said I,

"perhaps it might be convenient for you (as of course it would be
honourable to myself) if you were to regard yourself in the light

of my guest?"

"Sir," said he, "when an offer is frankly made, I think I honour myself most to imitate that frankness. Your hand, Mr. David; you have the character that I respect the most; you are one of those from whom a gentleman can take a favour and no more words about it.

I am an old soldier," he went on, looking rather disgusted-like

around my chamber, "and you need not fear I shall prove burthensome. I have ate too often at a dyke-side, drank of the ditch, and had no roof but the rain."

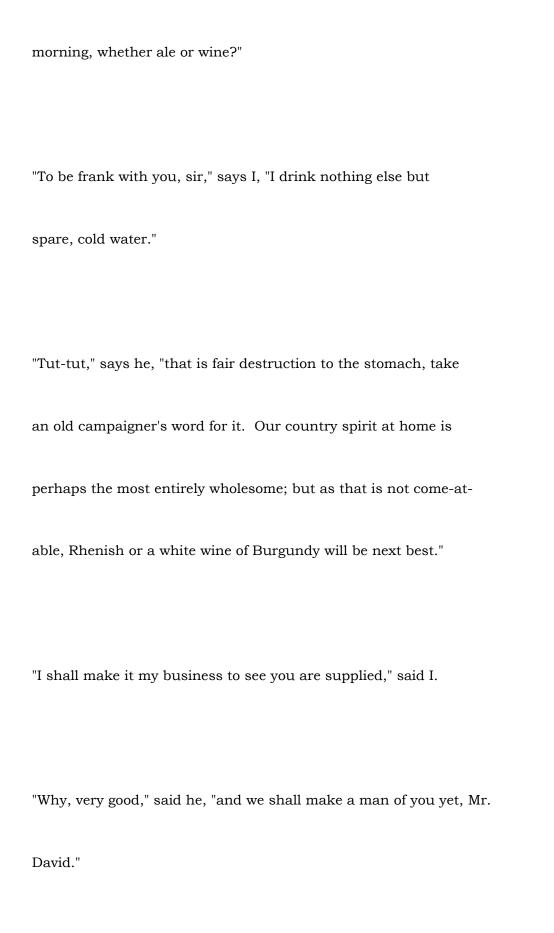
"I should be telling you," said I, "that our breakfasts are sent customarily in about this time of morning. I propose I should go now to the tavern, and bid them add a cover for yourself and delay the meal the matter of an hour, which will give you an interval to meet your daughter in."

Methought his nostrils wagged at this. "O, an hour" says he.

"That is perhaps superfluous. Half an hour, Mr. David, or say

twenty minutes; I shall do very well in that. And by the way," he

adds, detaining me by the coat, "what is it you drink in the



By this time, I can hardly say that I was minding him at all, beyond an odd thought of the kind of father-in-law that he was like to prove; and all my cares centred about the lass his daughter, to whom I determined to convey some warning of her visitor. I stepped to the door accordingly, and cried through the panels, knocking thereon at the same time: "Miss Drummond, here is your father come at last."

With that I went forth upon my errand, having (by two words) extraordinarily damaged my affairs.