

Selected Story.

How I Won the Laird's Daughter.

BY DANIEL GORRIE.

CHAPTER I.—Continued.

From many of the people upon whom we called I received kind invitations to spend the night in their houses, and I could have slept in a dozen different beds if I had felt so inclined; but I preferred returning to the Cross-Keys, that, like the apostle, I might be burdensome to none. It is a piece of worldly prudence to give as little trouble as possible to strangers; and medical practitioners, of all men in the world, require to be wary in their ways, and circumspect in their actions.

"You've got on grandly the night, Dr. Wilson," he said, dropping the "sir" when he considered me almost installed in office. "Ye've carried everything afore ye—I never saw the like o't. Ye hae got the promise o' practice frae the hale lot o' them—that's to say when they heed the attendance o' a medical man; and, 'od, doctor, but the womenkind are aften complainin'."

"Well, Mr. Barlas," I said (such was the landlord's name), "I have experienced much kindness and civility, and in the course of a few hours I have far outstripped my expectations. If I only succeed as well with the ladies and gentlemen in the neighborhood, I will not hesitate for a single moment in settling down in the midst of you."

"There's nae danger o' that, doctor, what's sauce or senna for the goose, is sauce or senna for the gander. I've seen aften eneuch that the grit folk are no sae ill to please as the sma'. If you get ower the Laird,—an' I think ye've as gude chance as any ither body,—ye needna fear muckle for the rest."

"And who is the Laird, Mr. Barlas?" I asked.

"Oh, just the Laird, ye ken—Laird Ramsay o' the Haugh; ye'll surely hae heard o' him afore ye cam south?"

"Ramsay," I said; "Ramsay—oh, yes,—I have a letter of introduction to a gentleman of that name from a professor in Edinburgh. Does he rule the roast in this neighborhood?"

"I'll tell you aboot him i' the noo; but wait a wee, doctor, till I bring ye something warm."

I did not disapprove of the medicine proposed by the host of the Cross-Keys of St. Dunstan, as I was anxious to know as much as possible about the place and people; and the influence of hot punch in making even sileat persons communicative is quite proverbial. Mr. Barlas, after a brief absence, returned to the snug little parlor, bearing his own private blue bottle, capable, I should think, of holding a good half gallon of Islay or Glenlivet; and we were soon sitting comfortably with steaming tumblers before us, beside a blazing fire.

"This is something social like, noo, doctor," said the composed and considerate landlord. "Ye were wantin' to hear aboot the Laird. Weel, I'll tell ye what sort o' a being he is, that ye may be on your guard when ye gang to the Haugh the morn. Laird Ramsay has mair gear, doctor, than ony half dozen o' his neighbors for many miles round, and he's a queer character wi' d' a'. He's unco auld-fashioned for a man in his station, an' speaks muckle sic like as ye hear me speakin' i' the noo. He gets the name o' haudin' a gude grip o' his siller; but I've nae reason to compleen, as he spends freely eneuch when he comes to the Cross-Keys, no forgettin' the servant-lass and the outler; an' I ken for a fac' that he slips a canny shillin' noo and again into the loofs of the pairt'folk of St. Dunstan. He's unco douce and proud,—ye might maist say sauey,—until ye get the right side o' him, an' then he's the best o' freends, an' nae better than the Laird at a twa-handed crack."

"And how do you get to the right side of him, Mr. Barlas?" I interjected.

"That's the very thing I was gaun to tell ye, doctor. Lay on the butter weel. Butter him on baith sides, and then ye can easy get to the right side. Praise his land, his craps, his nowte, his house, his garden, his Glenlivet, his everything; but tak care what ye say o' his dochter to his face."

"The Laird has got a daughter, then, it seems?"

"Ay, that he has, an' a comely quon she is; but he'll be a clever man wha can rio swa wi' her frae the Haugh. The Laird just dotes upon her, an' he wouldna pai t wi' her for love or siller. If she has a sweetheart, I'm thinkin' he'll need to sook his thoomb, an' bide a wee."

In answer to my inquiries the landlord informed me that Miss Jessie Ramsay was the Laird's only daughter, and that her mother had been dead for several years. His information and anecdotes regarding the eccentric character of the old-fashioned proprietor of the Haugh, excited my curiosity so much that I resolved to pay him an early visit on the following day. After sitting for an hour or two, during which time Mr. Barlas

became more and more loquacious, I seized the first favorable opportunity to propose an adjournment, and receiving the reluctant assent of mine host, I retired to rest, and slept soundly in spite of all the crowing cocks of St. Dunstan.
To be continued.



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