

LEEING DAVIE.

BY ANDREW PICKEN.

Every one knows that there are various degrees of excellence in lying, as there are in all the other polite arts. But there are some who, by their precocity of talent in this department of genius, discover at once that nature has designed them for achieving the most brilliant honors of invention: and this was the case with the subject of our memoir, who, in the day of his obscurity, was known only by the simple but unanimously awarded title of "Leeing Davie."

Davie's parents lived in Storey street, in the well-aid town of Paisley. They were very creditable people and had a numerous family, none of whom, however, showed any distinctive parts, save only Davie.

It answered Davie's purpose never to do the things that he was desired to do, and to do various other things that he was strictly enjoined not to do, but let the case be ever so bad, Davie was sure to get himself out of it by one or more good, well-told lies. It was his step-mother who suffered most in these cases. Sometimes, in her zeal for truth she let out expressions of perfect horror at Davie, calling him an inveterate and notorious liar; but this only served to make matters worse for her. The tables would be completely turned against her by the lad's inveterate skill and the father's partiality, until the cry of "my motherless children" became the watch-word which always ended in restoring Davie into favor and throwing all the wrath of the father against the hapless and simple-hearted mother.

Davie was actually awkward at the truth. When it was necessary to tell a few words of truth to make a lie tell better he hesitated and stammered and blushed, so that you could not help suspecting him and the truth itself, but when he had gone on to the main lie, for which he had gone through this painful preparation, he told it with such pleasure and with such a face that the whole showed that he was born to despise the inconvenient trammels of verity and to revel in the upper regions of pure invention.

One day Davie, who was now 15, was sent by his step-mother with a message to a friend at the farther end of the town. It was war time, and volunteering and recruiting presented too many temptations for Davie to resist, so he never thought of his message or of returning home till late that afternoon.

It drew toward evening, and still no appearance of Davie. Mr. Peterkin, being in a particularly favorable humor tonight all Davie's tricks and lies were laid before him by his wife, and the two joined in heartily in abusing the luckless lad.

Now there was quartered in town a remarkably handsome officer, who created a great sensation among the women; and there was also in town an uncommonly pretty woman, a Mrs. Templeton, who peculiarly favored this Captain Palmer. Whenever, therefore, husband and wife were on such terms as to gossip comfortably together, a pleasant subject could not be started than the scandalous conduct of Mrs. Templeton and Captain Palmer; and now to this very topic Mr. Peterkin and his wife had agreeably diverged.

When Davie was within a few paces of his father's door he applied to his wits, as formerly, to get out of the scrape. But the greatest geniuses will sometimes break down, and Davie found himself at fault. He had already tried his wits on all the subjects that were worthy of his powers. He had got into the room where his father and mother were sitting without a single thought occurring to him to account for his day's employment. But as he slipped into the room the names of Captain Palmer and Mrs. Templeton struck his ear, and so he had the whole thing ready; and not only so, but his fancy being now awake, a train of ideas darted into his head, all the way from the seat of war, that would almost have filled a newspaper.

"You unmanageable rascal!" said his father, looking around, "where have you been all day? Give an account of yourself this instant."

"So I will, father," said Davie, modestly; "I would have been home long since, but I could not get out of the crowd."

"What crowd, you lying villain?"

"The crowd at the Cross about the news."

"What news have you brought now? None of your stories, Davie, this time; it won't do."

"Then you have not heard the news, sir? The mail's not in yet, but an English rider came to town on a reeking horse with the news that there had been a great battle abroad, and 60,000 of the French killed, besides General Bonaparte himself!"

"Davie!" cried his father, cocking his ears, "is that really for a fact?"

"It's as true as death, sir. I saw the rider at the town's house, and there's a

great crowd waiting for the mail. But I would have gotten home well enough only for the business about Mrs. Templeton."

"Mrs. Templeton?" cried father and mother together. "What of her? What is the story about, Davie?"

"Ye has na heard, then, that she run off wi' Capt. Palmer this morning in a chaise and four, and—"

"There, now, gadman, I told you I cried Mrs. Peterkin. 'O, the wanton wretch! But what more, Davie?'"

"I thought you had heard of it," said Davie, quietly; "but there was Mr. Templeton in another chaise and four after them; forbye Will Craig, the town's officer, mounted behind wi' his red coat and the two dragons riding before, an' all flying like Jehu!"

"But who told you these particulars, Davie?" said his father. "I should like to know your authority."

"It was Deacon Dote," answered Davie, readily. "I saw him at the Cross, and he asked kindly for you and mother."

"Deacon Dote is a 'sensible, sensible man, and it must be an undoubted fact," said Mr. Peterkin, solemnly. "This is a most extraordinary world!"

It happened to be club night, and the hour was now at hand; so Mr. Peterkin, knowing that a man's importance in his club was in proportion to the news he brought, rose instantly from the table, impatient to be first with the intelligence. Never did a man change his coat and brush his hair over the bald places with greater pleasure than did Mr. Peterkin this night. His wife and he were in perfect fondness and cordiality from delight in their social merriment of scandal.

We leave the reader's imagination to conceive Mr. Peterkin's pleasure on finding that he was the sole bearer of and referee upon this news, so refreshing to the weary spirits of a country club. He was somewhat damped on finding that the English rider's intelligence about the great battle was not confirmed by the newspapers which soon after arrived. But the story about Mrs. Templeton was so rich and prolific that it eclipsed all the foreign news that had been brought to the club for months. Not but that the zeal of the club for virtue and morals and all that was greatly kindled, but the zeal and honest wrath of the members was chiefly manifested by the turn of the conversation to similar instances of female frailty, and the most interesting and instructive discourse was kept up upon the subject the whole evening.

Mr. Peterkin and his wife rejoiced in the pleasures of their story for two whole days, and had the satisfaction of hearing it confirmed everywhere; in fact, it was the talk of all the talkers in town. On the evening of the second day, however, while the two sat at tea, discussing the additional particulars which public rumor had by this time engendered upon it, a knocking was heard below, and the servant girl informed Mr. Peterkin that two strange men waited at the door to speak to him.

When our friend had descended the stairs he started with surprise on seeing the King's messenger and William Craig, the town's officer, waiting for him.

"Is your name James Peterkin?" said the former, with legal formality.

"It is," replied Peterkin, his heart in his throat.

"I serve you with this instrument, with witness present," said the messenger, putting a paper into the frightened man's hand.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Peterkin," continued the messenger, "ye had better scalded yer tongue in hot kail than to have raised this clishmalclaver about Mrs. Templeton. You are to be examined before the public functionaries, within the clerk's chamber, tomorrow at 11 o'clock, there to answer at your peril. An' there'll be Mr. Templeton, himself, to confront you, sir, and if it be proven upon you, you shall be punished with the utmost rigor of the law."

"And I would advise you as a friend, Mr. Peterkin," added the officer, striking in, "to keep out of Captain Palmer's way, for he's going about with a sword, new out of the cutler's, and a pair of great horse pistols, swearing that if he gets you he'll stick you like a calf an' blow your brains out forbye."

"You're in a melancholy predicament. I tell you as a friend," rejoined the messenger, "and so, good night."

At length the dreadful morn arrived, and Mr. Peterkin, having adorned himself with a clean crilled shirt, girded up his strength and marched forth to take his trial. Great was the bustle on his arrival in the court.

"James Peterkin," said the provost, with sonorous solemnity, "you are accused of having maliciously spread abroad certain false and scandalous reports injurious to the character of a worthy lady. What have you to say in your defense?"

Mr. Peterkin's mouth was as dry as a burnt stick and he looked round for help in vain.

"I am sorry to see you standing at this disgraceful bar, Mr. Peterkin," said little Bailie Shuttleton, who, having lately married a handsome young wife of whom he was desperately jealous, felt a laudable zeal and a sensitive sympathy

in a matter so nearly coming home to himself.

"How could you, sir, be guilty of spreading such a scandal?" said Bailie Farrier next, who was by no means uninterested in this affair, for the good people of Paisley had uttered sundry dark sayings regarding him and Bailie Shuttleton's young wife.

"Have you any witnesses, James?" inquired the provost.

"Yes, Bailie, various," said he, courageously; for at this moment Deacon Dote entered the court, and, at Mr. Peterkin's request, he was ordered to stand forth.

"William Dote," continued the chief magistrate, "did you tell the defendant these scandalous particulars against the character of Mrs. Templeton?"

"Indeed, sirs," exclaimed the deacon, indignantly, "I did no such thing. I could na have had the heart to speak a word to disparage that sweet Mrs. Templeton. Besides, sir, provost, I have na spoken to Mr. Peterkin this whole fortnight."

"But you told the story to my son, Davie," said Peterkin, with great courage. "Come forward, Davie, lad."

Davie came forward modestly, gracefully, and with an air of honest confidence.

"Young man," said the provost, "hold up your head, and never be ashamed to tell the truth. Did William Dote tell you last week these particulars reported of Mrs. Templeton?"

"No, your worship's honor, he did not."

"Did you not," interrupted his father, "tell us the story about Mrs. Templeton Tuesday evening last, you villain?"

"Not a word of it, father; you're intirely in a mistake, but I heard my father and mother talking about Mrs. Templeton and Captain Palmer when I came home free the volunteer park."

"This is a black business, Mr. Peterkin," said the Provost. "If you're not able to raise £500 or £600 for damages I am afraid the said jail will have a tedious tenant of you. I always thought you a man of truth and character till now; yet there's your own son, whose very face has honesty in it, has convicted you of falsehood before this whole court."

"What have you to say in this business, mistress?" demanded he, as Mrs. Peterkin arose.

"I have to say, sirs," she answered, in evident wrath, "that all this business is as clear to me as a green leek. It is just as visible to me as the pimple on your nose that this whole mishanter is raised by that brazen-faced Davie, the leeing callan there. I can tell you, sirs, from back experience that the ne'er-do-weel is one of the most inveterate, incorrigible, mischievous lasses that ever opened a mouth. The said father o'—himself is but a bungler to him. I heard the whole story free him wi' my ain ears, an' he fattered the whole on the authority of Deacon Dote there, spiritless body!"

Little Bailie Shuttleton now drew himself up, and proceeded to catechise Davie.

"Now, my lad," he began, "speak freely. Did you tell nothing to your father and mother last Tuesday of a gentleman and a lady having eloped together, and of other persons going in pursuit of them?"

"Yes, sir, but I said nothing about Captain Palmer and Mrs. Templeton."

"And whom, then, did you tell about?"

"I'm afeared to tell, sir," said Davie, modestly.

The heart of Bailie Shuttleton gave a suspicious bump, while an awful silence descended upon the court.

"Nay, but what was the name of the lady?" said the provost.

"Weel, sir," said Davie, "it was just Mrs. Shuttleton, the bailie's young wife, and the gentleman was just Captain Farrier, beside you there."

"Farrier and Shuttleton might have been taken for Palmer and Templeton, certainly," said the Provost, with judicial gravity.

"But who dared to tell you that Bailie Farrier had run off with my wife, young man?" said the jealous little magistrate, hardly able to sit on his seat with vexation.

"I saw it wi' my ain een, sirs," said Davie.

By this time the whole crowd within the bar was in a titter of whispering surmises about Bailie Shuttleton's lady. William Craig, the officer, was making the most magnificent grimaces to Deacon Dote and other bystanders; and Captain Palmer, who stood behind looking through his eyeglasses at the scene, burst out into audible laughter.

"But who did tell you the particulars you told your parents, boy?" continued Bailie Farrier, determined to sift the matter. "If it was not Deacon Dote?"

"It was just Deacon Dottie, the meal-monger in Dirty street," said Davie, readily.

"Faith, the colleen's done for now. I'm thinking," said Craig, the officer, whose shrewdness was well known. "Deacon Dottie's not far to fetch

Bailie; I saw him pass the window this minute."

"Bring him in, William," said they all; and by this time Mr. Peterkin and his wife were rather enjoying the scene than otherwise.

When the other deacon was brought in and confronted with the lad, the whole story was seen to be a league of fabrications, and the tables were completely turned upon Davie, who was forthwith committed for 24 hours in the jail.

But Davie himself was not particularly discomposed by this passing "mischance," and before two days were over had brought home to his father another pleasant story, how that the provost of Paisley had given Capt. Palmer a black eye, in a duel fought at the back of Mrs. Ralston's house, about Mrs. Templeton.

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Personal.—This paper makes a practice to examine closely and reject all matters of such a character as could be in any way objectionable to our readers, but the following, drawing as it does to your notice the name of an article of sterling merit, know throughout the land as the only sure and non-poisonous remedy for corns, is welcome to a place in our columns. Putnam's Painless Corn Extract now finds its way to every part of the world, which is in itself a guarantee of its merit. We advise our readers to buy it, and also to make sure when purchasing to buy it, and also to make sure when purchasing to get Putnam's Painless Corn Extract. Putnam & Co., Kingston, props.

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