

she bestowed on her aged parent, was a theme of praise to the neighbours, and a subject of envy to mothers who had not experienced similar regard from their children. The frailty of her parent, who had long been in tender health, had, no doubt, strengthened the sympathies of Lucy; but the kindness she extended to her mother was only a concentration of that feeling of universal goodwill and friendship which she felt for all with whom she was acquainted. The sweetness of her manners; her imperturbable good-nature; her kind offices, ready on every occasion and for every friend; the softness and gentleness of her speech and conduct; her total freedom from vanity or self-will—all set off by beauty of no ordinary kind—obtained for this young maiden the universal favour of the inhabitants, the affection of her friends, the loves of the young men, and the emulation, untainted by envy, of the young women.

As a good daughter generally makes a faithful and obedient wife, it was not to be wondered at that Lucy Pringle had many admirers. Among these might be reckoned George Belford, who held the first place in her affections. Her heart was also solicited by no less a personage than the youngest bailie of Roxburgh, called Walter Paxton, a man the very reverse of his less illustrious but more favoured rival. Paxton had been in London; and it was even said he had visited Paris—a journey, in those days, of no less importance, and reflecting nearly as great honour on those who had the good fortune to have accomplished it, as a voyage to China, in these space-annihilating times.

In these foreign excursions, Paxton had laid down his Scotch manners and Scotch accent, and received in exchange, those of England. His Scotch honesty, if he ever possessed any, was left behind him at Paris. His temperance he had parted with before he left his country; having, perhaps, considered it as a vulgar appendage in a place like Paris, where licentiousness had, even at that early period, begun to ape the legalized and respectable character of a household virtue. The conduct of one who made vicious indulgences a system formed on authority, could not fail to cause much speculation in a small town which had only yet known the crimes which follow the chariot

of war. Paxton was, therefore, soon pointed out as a profligate, who erected for his private sacrifices an altar to vicious pleasures of every kind which could for a moment gratify a depraved appetite. But the most remarkable part of his character, was his total want of feeling for the miseries of those who attempted to oppose the front of a virtuous resolution against the gratification of his desires. Every man or woman that came in the way of his pleasure, was set down as his enemy; and such was the perversity of his mind, that the hatred he nourished against the often unconscious disturbers of his pleasures, was considered by him as legitimate and proper as it had been directed towards public criminals. His revenge was deadly, fruitful of endless expedients, and apparently insatiable. The person who incurred his displeasure might well be called unfortunate; for while the powers of injury are innumerable, and the desire of inflicting pain constant and unremitting, it is difficult, if not impossible, even in high civilized times, for the destined victim of a disciplined avenger to escape the snares laid for his destruction.

It may be well wondered at, that such a man as Walter Paxton should ever have filled the situation of magistrate in such a country as Scotland; but it is much to be feared that his country, though boasting of the possession of a good stock of private morals, has never, at an time, been remarkable for the purity of its official characters. Indeed a poor country runs always a great risk of having its public stations occupied by bad men. The power of money is felt there with greater effect; and bribery and poverty are only the counterparts of public venality and corruption. What is applicable to the higher departments of the state is, in this respect, not unsuited to the insignificant dominations of town magistracies. Paxton's money, assuming the form of a golden key, opened for him the doors of the Council Chamber of Roxburgh, which, otherwise, would have been shut against his open and flagrant breaches of public morals and private obligations. The patron of vice sat in the chair of judgment; and it would be difficult to condemn it as a virtue, or censure it as a crime, that the vices which he openly practised, and encouraged his fellow citizens to commit, were punished by him with a severity which deserved the character of