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THE WAY TO RISE.

ABOUT sixty years ago, there dwelt in the town of Burnt-Island, situated on the west coast of Fifeshire, just opposite Edinburgh, a certain merchant, named Robin Drysdell, its most distinguished inhabitant. He was a trader in extensive business, having the entire ownership of two coasting vessels, besides a large share in a three-masted West Indiaman, that was seen regularly, once a year, sweeping up the Firth of Forth, laden with the produce of another zone, and putting to shame with her white lofty sails, as she drew it towards the bay, the humbler craft, whose uncouth locking hulls and sooty lamps crowded the port.—Mr. Drysdell was not only the richest merchant, but at the time we take up our tale, had obtained the highest civil dignity in the place, viz: that of baillie or chief magistrate: he was also an elder of the kirk,—an office, as it is managed in Scotland, of no small ecclesiastical dignity; and withal, held the military rank of captain in the Fifeshire militia. These honours, however, were not all of the baillie's seeking;—they rather devolved upon him as a necessary concomitant of his rising fortune, and he submitted to their infliction accordingly.

We do not mean to say he was not proud of all and each of them; but there were some points attending them—and more particularly at the time those different duties deducted from what was formerly devoted to his peculiar affairs,—which, to use his own expression, were *fashionous*. Even at the proudest of his social moments, too, there was a feeling of awkwardness he could not overcome, which impeded the satisfaction he might be expected to feel.

It was, for instance, with something amounting to shame, that he made his way through the crowd of urchins assembled at the door, to see the baillie issue forth in his regimentals,

when the militia were on duty; and on such occasions, it was observed that he frequently reached the rendezvous in a more profuse perspiration than either the weather or the distance accounted for. Neither was he at perfect ease, when, in the magisterial duties, he was marshalled to church on the Sabbath, by two halberdiers dressed in red coats, the council following at a respectful distance, and the procession brought up by the town crier.—Even when standing at the plate in his capacity of elder, there was something annoying in being stuck up for the gaze of the public, when every other Christian was allowed to pass quietly on, and in being constrained for half an hour together, with the polite humility esteemed decorous in a servant of the poor, to bob his head to every dull tinkle which the half pence made as they descended into the pewter basin. But the counting-house was his proper element,—there he found himself at home; and with his short thick pen, firmly compressed between his lips, his squat figure in a well worn coatie, or short coat, of a snuff colour, and a ruler in his left hand, which it was his custom to retain even after leaving the desk, he felt himself a man of more consequence, and actually commanded more respect, than when surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of official dignity.

There was only one quay in Burnt-Island, which ran out from one side of the wharf or breast, a considerable distance from the sea, and forming a curve towards the end, confined the shipping in a pretty secure and commodious basin. At the entrance of the quay, and only separated from it by the breadth of the street, stood the baillie's house,—a large, three-storied tenement, about two thirds of which were devoted to business, and the remainder to domestic purposes. It was distinguished from the rest of the houses in the street, by its greater height, and by a huge