

his head, and that through the hole an eye was watching him. It was the most absurd thing, and experiment with a hole in a door will not make plain the reason of it; but in that eye, apparently little discomfited by the stranger having observed it, Count Victor saw its owner fully revealed.

A grey eye inquiring, an eye of middle age that had caution as well as humour. A domestic—a menial eye too, but for the life of him Count Victor could not resist smiling back to it.

And then it disappeared and the door opened, showing on the threshold, with a stool in his hand, a very little bow-legged man of fifty years or thereby, having a face all lined, like a chart, with wrinkles, ruddy at the cheeks as a winter apple, and attired in a mulberry-brown. He put his heels together with a mechanical precision and gravely gave a military salute.

"Doom?" inquired Count Victor formally, with a foot inside the door.

"Jist that," answered the servitor a little drily, and yet with a smile puckering his face as he put an opposing toe of a coarse unbuckled brogue under the instep of the stranger. The accent of the reply smacked of Fife; when he heard it, Count Victor at a leap was back in the port of Dysart, where it shrank beneath tall rocks, and he was hearing again for the first time with an amused wonder the native mariners crying to each other on the quays.

"Is your master at home?" he asked.

"At hame, quo' he! It wad depend a'thegether on wha wants to ken," said the servant cautiously. Then in a manner ludicrously composed of natural geniality and burlesque importance, "It's the auld styles aboot Doom, sir, though there's few o' us left to keep them up, and whether the Baron's oot or in is a thing that has to be studied maist scrupulously before the like o' me could say."

"My name is De Montaignon; I am newly from France; I——"