

He was footman to the Countess of Wemyss, who resided in a fashionable flat in the Parliament Close, and on the forenoon of the eventful 7th of September 1736 he was despatched on an errand to Craigiehall, from whence he did not return till the evening. The libel of His Majesty's Advocate sets forth, that having delivered his message "the pannel went from my Lady Wemyss' house to John Lamb's alehouse in the same stair," from whence he issued shortly after in a jovial state, attracting everybody's notice by his showy livery during the stirring scenes of that eventful night, in which he mingled, perfectly oblivious of all that was being enacted around him; and running a very narrow risk of being made the scapegoat of the imbecile magistracy, who only wanted a decent pretext for sacrificing a score of blackguards to the manes of Porteous and the wrath of Queen Caroline.

The close connection into which the noble family of Wemyss were thus brought with the Porteous mob, as well as their near vicinity to the chief scene of action, naturally produced a strong impression on the younger members of the family. They had probably been aroused from their beds by the shouts of the rioters assembling beneath their windows, and the din of their sledge-hammers thundering on the Tolbooth door; and when the rest of the town was settling down again into its ordinary habits, after the recent commotion, they were anew alarmed by the apprehension of *William*. He was to all appearance an honest enough serving-man according to the fashion of the times, whose worst fault was a relish for John Lamb's ale that lay so temptingly at hand; but he suddenly found the unenviable honour thrust upon him of being accused as the arch-conspirator against the good city and its liege lady. The event was like to have proved fatal to the family in more ways than one, for not long after the great-grandfather of the present Earl, then a boy, proceeded along with his sisters to get up a representation of the stirring scenes of the Porteous mob; and the young romps having duly broken into the prison and carried off the supposed culprit, they got so thoroughly into the spirit of their dramatic sport that they hung up their brother over a door, and had wellnigh finished their play in dire tragedy.

During the greater part of last century, and down to the destruction of the old buildings in 1824, the north-east corner of the Parliament Close was occupied as John's Coffee-house; where, as Defoe tells us, the opponent of the Union used to meet to discuss the proceedings that were going on in the neighbouring Parliament House, and to concoct fresh means of opposition to that odious measure. It was also the favourite resort of the lawyers and judges of last century for professional consultations, as well as for their *meridian*, or *twal' hours*, as the mid-day glass of whisky was called, which formed the indispensable refreshment of all classes at that period. In a note to Allan Ramsay's familiar epistle he illustrates his remark, "frae the gill-