SIR WALTER SCOTT

Coronach

He is gone on the mountain,
    He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
    When our need was the sorest.
The font, reappearing,
    From the raindrops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
    To Duncan no morrow!
The hand of the reaper
    Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
    Wails manhood in glory.
The autumn winds rushing
    Waft the leaves that are searest,
But our flower was in flushing,
    When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,
    Sage counsel in cumber,
Red hand in the foray,
    How sound is thy slumber!
Like the dew on the mountain,
    Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
    Thou art gone, and forever.

1810

1. From Scott’s verse narrative The Lady of the Lake. “The Coronach of the highlanders... was a wild expression of lamentation, poured forth by the mourners over the body of a departed friend”

[Scott’s note].

2. A hollow, where wild game is apt to hid.

3. Encumbrance, trouble.
Chapter I. Being Introductory

So down thy hill, romantic Ashbourn, glides
The Derby dilly, carrying six insides.

The times have changed in nothing more (we follow as we were wont the manuscript of Peter Pattieson) than in the rapid conveyance of intelligence and communication betwixt one part of Scotland and another. It is not above twenty or thirty years, according to the evidence of many credible witnesses now alive, since a little miserable horse-cart, performing with difficulty a journey of thirty miles per diem, carried our mails from the capital of Scotland to its extremity. Nor was Scotland much more deficient in these accommodations, than our richer sister had been about eighty years before. Fielding, in his *Tom Jones,* and Farquhar, in a little farce called the *Stage Coach,* have ridiculed the slowness of these vehicles of public accommodation. According to the latter authority, the highest bribe could only induce the coachman to promise to anticipate by half an hour the usual time of his arrival at the Bull and Mouth.

But in both countries these ancient, slow, and sure modes of conveyance, are now alike unknown; mail-coach races against mail-coach, and high-flyer against high-flyer, through the most remote districts of Britain. And in our village alone, three post-coaches, and four coaches with men armed, and in scarlet cassocks, thunder through the streets each day, and rival in brilliancy and noise the invention of the celebrated tyrant:—

*Demens, qui nimbos et non inimicabile fulmen,
Aere et cornipedum pulsus, simularat, equorum.*

Now and then, to complete the resemblance, and to correct the presumption of the venturous charioteers, it does happen that the career of these dashing rivals of Salmoneus meets with as undesirable and violent a termination as that of their prototype. It is on such occasions that the Insides and Outsides, to use the appropriate vehicular phrases, have reason to rue the exchange of the slow and safe motion of the ancient Fly-coaches, which, compared with the chariots of Mr. Palmer, so ill deserve the name. The ancient vehicle used to settle quietly down, like a ship scuttled and left to sink by the gradual influx of the waters, while the modern is smashed to pieces with the velocity of the same vessel hurled against breakers, or rather with the fury of a bomb bursting at the conclusion of its career through the air. The late ingenious Mr. Pennant, whose humor it was to set his
face in stern opposition to these speedy conveyances, had collected, I have heard, a formidable list of such casualties, which, joined to the imposition of innkeepers, whose charges the passengers had no time to dispute, the sauciness of the coachman, and the uncontrolled and despotic authority of the tyrant called the Guard, held forth a picture of horror, to which murder, theft, fraud, and peculation, lent all their dark coloring. But that which gratifies the impatience of the human disposition will be practiced in the teeth of danger, and in defiance of admonition; and, in despite of the Cambrian antiquity, mail-coaches not only roll their thunders round the base of Penman-Maur and Cader-Edris, but

Frighted Skiddaw hears afar
The rattling of the unscythed car.

And perhaps the echoes of Ben-Nevis may soon be awakened by the bugle, not of a warlike chieftain, but of the guard of a mail-coach.

It was a fine summer day, and our little school had obtained a half holyday, by the intercession of a good-humored visitor. I expected by the coach a new number of an interesting periodical publication, and walked forward on the highway to meet it, with the impatience which Cowper has described as actuating the resident in the country when longing for intelligence from the mart of news:

“The grand debate,
The popular harangue,—the tart reply,—
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh,—I long to know them all;—
I burn to set the imprison’d wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.”

It was with such feelings that I eyed the approach of the new coach, lately established on our road, and known by the name of the Somerset, which, to say truth, possesses some interest for me, even when it conveys no such important information. The distant tremulous sound of its wheels was heard just as I gained the summit of the gentle ascent, called the Goslin-brae, from which you command an extensive view down the valley of the river Gander. The public road, which comes up the side of that stream, and crosses it at a bridge about a quarter of a mile from the place where I was standing, runs partly through enclosures and plantations, and partly through open pasture land. It is a childish amusement perhaps,—but my life has been spent with children, and why should not my pleasures be like theirs?—childish as it is then, I must own I have had great pleasure in watching the approach of the carriage, where the openings of the road permit it to be seen. The gay glancing of the equipage, its diminished and toy-like appearance at a distance, contrasted with the rapidity of its motion, its appearance and disappearance at intervals, and the progressively increasing sounds that announce its nearer approach, have all to the idle and listless spectator, who has nothing more important to attend to, something of awakening interest. The ridicule may attach to me, which is flung upon many an honest citizen, who watches from the window of his villa the passage of the stage-coach; but it is a very natural source of amusement notwithstanding, and many of those who join in the laugh are perhaps not unused to resort to it in secret.
On the present occasion, however, fate had decreed that I should not enjoy
the consummation of the amusement by seeing the coach rattle past me as I sat
on the turf, and hearing the hoarse grating voice of the guard as he skimmed
forth for my grasp the expected packet, without the carriage checking its course
for an instant. I had seen the vehicle thunder down the hill that leads to the
bridge with more than its usual impetuosity, glittering all the while by flashes
from a cloudy tabernacle of the dust which it had raised, and leaving a train
behind it on the road resembling a wreath of summer mist. But it did not appear
on the top of the nearer bank within the usual space of three minutes, which
frequent observation had enabled me to ascertain was the medium time for
crossing the bridge and mounting the ascent. When double that space had
elapsed, I became alarmed, and walked hastily forward. As I came in sight of the
bridge, the cause of delay was too manifest, for the Somerset had made a sum-
merset\(^4\) in good earnest, and overturned so completely, that it was literally rest-
ing upon the ground, with the roof undermost, and the four wheels in the air.
The “exertions of the guard and coachman,” both of whom were gratefully com-
memorated in the newspapers, having succeeded in disentangling the horses by
cutting the harness, were now proceeding to extricate the insides by a sort of
summary and Caesarean process of delivery, forcing the hinges from one of the
doors which they could not open otherwise. In this manner were two disconso-
late damsels set at liberty from the womb of the leathern conveniency. As they
immediately began to settle their clothes, which were a little deranged, as may
be presumed, I concluded they had received no injury, and did not venture to
obtrude my services at their toilette, for which, I understand, I have since been
reflected upon by the fair sufferers. The outsides, who must have been dis-
charged from their elevated situation by a shock resembling the springing of a
mine, escaped, nevertheless, with the usual allowance of scratches and bruises,
excepting three, who, having been pitched into the river Gander, were dimly
seen contending with the tide, like the relics of Aeneas’s shipwreck,—

*Rari apparent nantes in gurgite vasto.*\(^5\)

I applied my poor exertions where they seemed to be most needed, and with
the assistance of one or two of the company who had escaped unhurt, easily
succeeded in fishing out two of the unfortunate passengers, who were stout
active young fellows; and but for the preposterous length of their great-coats,
and the equally fashionable latitude and longitude of their Wellington trousers,
would have required little assistance from any one. The third was sickly and el-
derly, and might have perished but for the efforts used to preserve him.

When the two great-coated gentlemen had extricated themselves from the
river, and shaken their ears like huge water-dogs, a violent altercation ensued
betwixt them and the coachman and guard, concerning the cause of their over-
throw. In the course of the squabble, I observed that both my new acquaintances
belonged to the law, and that their professional sharpness was likely to prove an
over-match for the surly and official tone of the guardians of the vehicle. The dis-
pute ended in the guard assuring the passengers that they should have seats in a
heavy coach which would pass that spot in less than half an hour, providing it
were not full. Chance seemed to favor this arrangement, for when the expected
vehicle arrived, there were only two places occupied in a carriage which professed
to carry six. The two ladies who had been disinterred out of the fallen vehicle
were readily admitted, but positive objections were stated by those previously in

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4. Or somerset, a play on the name of the coach
(“Somerset”) and a form of modern somersault.

5. *Aeneid* 1.118: “Here and there are seen swimmers in the vast abyss.”
possession to the admittance of the two lawyers, whose wetted garments being much of the nature of well-soaked sponges, there was every reason to believe they would refund a considerable part of the water they had collected, to the inconvenience of their fellow-passengers. On the other hand, the lawyers rejected a seat on the roof, alleging that they had only taken that station for pleasure for one stage, but were entitled in all respects to free egress and regress from the interior, to which their contract positively referred. After some altercation, in which something was said upon the edict Nautae, caupones, stabularii,6 the coach went off, leaving the learned gentlemen to abide by their action of damages.

They immediately applied to me to guide them to the next village and the best inn; and from the account I gave them of the Wallace-Head, declared they were much better pleased to stop there than to go forward upon the terms of that impudent scoundrel the guard of the Somerset. All that they now wanted was a lad to carry their travelling bags, who was easily procured from an adjoining cottage; and they prepared to walk forward, when they found there was another passenger in the same deserted situation with themselves. This was the elderly and sickly-looking person, who had been precipitated into the river along with the two young lawyers. He, it seems, had been too modest to push his own plea against the coachman when he saw that of his betters rejected, and now remained behind with a look of timid anxiety, plainly intimating that he was deficient in those means of recommendation which are necessary passports to the hospitality of an inn.

I ventured to call the attention of the two dashing young blades, for such they seemed, to the desolate condition of their fellow-traveller. They took the hint with ready good-nature.

“O, true, Mr. Dunover,” said one of the youngsters, “you must not remain on the pavé 7 here; you must go and have some dinner with us—Halkit and I must have a post-chaise to go on, at all events, and we will set you down wherever suits you best.”

The poor man, for such his dress, as well as his diffidence, bespoke him, made the sort of acknowledging bow by which says a Scotchman, “It’s too much honor for the like of me”; and followed humbly behind his gay patrons, all three besprinkling the dusty road as they walked along with the moisture of their drenched garments, and exhibiting the singular and somewhat ridiculous appearance of three persons suffering from the opposite extreme of humidity, while the summer sun was at its height, and everything else around them had the expression of heat and drought. The ridicule did not escape the young gentlemen themselves, and they had made what might be received as one or two tolerable jests on the subject before they had advanced far on their peregrination.

“We cannot complain, like Cowley,” said one of them, “that Gideon’s fleece remains dry, while all around is moist; this is the reverse of the miracle.”8

“We ought to be received with gratitude in this good town; we bring a supply of what they seem to need most,” said Halkit.

“And distribute it with unparalleled generosity,” replied his companion; “performing the part of three water-carts for the benefit of their dusty roads.”

“We come before them, too,” said Halkit, “in full professional force—counsel and agent—”

“And client,” said the young advocate, looking behind him. And then added, lowering his voice, “that looks as if he had kept such dangerous company too long.”

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6. A Roman law that imposed strict liability on shipmasters, innkeepers, and stablekeepers for the safety of property entrusted to them.
7. Pavement.
It was, indeed, too true, that the humble follower of the gay young men had the threadbare appearance of a worn-out litigant, and I could not but smile at the conceit, though anxious to conceal my mirth from the object of it.

When we arrived at the Wallace Inn, the elder of the Edinburgh gentlemen, and whom I understood to be a barrister, insisted that I should remain and take part of their dinner; and their enquiries and demands speedily put my landlord and his whole family in motion to produce the best cheer which the larder and cellar afforded, and proceed to cook it to the best advantage, a science in which our entertainers seemed to be admirably skilled. In other respects they were lively young men, in the hey-day of youth and good spirits, playing the part which is common to the higher classes of the law at Edinburgh, and which nearly resembles that of the young templars in the days of Steele and Addison. An air of giddy gaiety mingled with the good sense, taste, and information which their conversation exhibited; and it seemed to be their object to unite the character of men of fashion and lovers of the polite arts. A fine gentleman, bred up in the thorough idleness and inanity of pursuit, which I understand is absolutely necessary to the character in perfection, might in all probability have traced a tinge of professional pedantry which marked the barrister in spite of his efforts, and something of active bustle in his companion, and would certainly have detected more than a fashionable mixture of information and animated interest in the language of both. But to me, who had no pretensions to be so critical, my companions seemed to form a very happy mixture of good-breeding and liberal information, with a disposition to lively rattle, pun, and jest, amusing to a grave man, because it is what he himself can least easily command.

The thin pale-faced man, whom their good-nature had brought into their society, looked out of place, as well as out of spirits; sate on the edge of his seat, and kept the chair at two feet distance from the table; thus incommoding himself considerably in conveying the victuals to his mouth, as if by way of penance for partaking of them in the company of his superiors. A short time after dinner, declining all entreaty to partake of the wine, which circulated freely round, he informed himself of the hour when the chaise had been ordered to attend; and saying he would be in readiness, modestly withdrew from the apartment.

"Jack," said the barrister to his companion, "I remember that poor fellow’s face; you spoke more truly than you were aware of; he really is one of my clients, poor man."

"Poor man!" echoed Halkit—"I suppose you mean he is your one and only client?"

"That’s not my fault, Jack," replied the other, whose name I discovered was Hardie. "You are to give me all your business, you know; and if you have none, the learned gentleman here knows nothing can come of nothing."

"You seem to have brought something to nothing though, in the case of that honest man. He looks as if he were just about to honor with his residence the Heart of Midlothian."

"You are mistaken—he is just delivered from it.—Our friend here looks for an explanation. Pray, Mr. Pattieson, have you been in Edinburgh?"

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9. One who can plead cases in the superior courts of law. Halkit is a solicitor, admitted only to the lower courts.
2. The Aristotelian maxim “Ex nihilo nihil fit” (the basis of Lear’s famous response to his daughter Cordelia, “Nothing will come of nothing,” King Lear 1.1.88).
I answered in the affirmative.
“Then you must have passed, occasionally at least, though probably not so faithfully as I am doomed to do, through a narrow intricate passage, leading out of the north-west corner of the Parliament Square, and passing by a high and antique building, with turrets and iron grates,

Making good the saying odd,
Near the church and far from God”—3

Mr. Halkit broke in upon his learned counsel, to contribute his moiety to the riddle—“Having at the door the sign of the Red Man—”

“And being on the whole,” resumed the counsellor, interrupting his friend in his turn, “a sort of place where misfortune is happily confounded with guilt, where all who are in wish to get out—”

“And where none who have the good luck to be out, wish to get in,” added his companion.

“I conceive you, gentlemen,” replied I; “you mean the prison.”

“The prison,” added the young lawyer—“You have hit it—the very reverend Tolbooth itself; and let me tell you, you are obliged to us for describing it with so much modesty and brevity; for with whatever amplifications we might have chosen to decorate the subject, you lay entirely at our mercy, since the Fathers Conscript of our city have decreed, that the venerable edifice itself shall not remain in existence to confirm or to confute us.”

“Then the Tolbooth of Edinburgh is called the Heart of Midlothian?” said I.

“So termed and reputed, I assure you.”

“I think,” said I, with the bashful diffidence with which a man lets slip a pun in presence of his superiors, “the metropolitan county may, in that case, be said to have a sad heart.”

“Right as my glove, Mr. Pattieson,” added Mr. Hardie; “and a close heart, and a hard heart—Keep it up, Jack.”

“And a wicked heart, and a poor heart,” answered Halkit, doing his best.

“And yet it may be called in some sort a strong heart, and a high heart,” rejoined the advocate. “You see I can put you both out of heart.”

“I have played all my hearts,” said the younger gentleman.

“Then we’ll have another lead,” answered his companion.—“And as to the old and condemned Tolbooth, what pity the same honor cannot be done to it as has been done to many of its inmates. Why should not the Tolbooth have its ‘Last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words’? The old stones would be just as conscious of the honor as many a poor devil who has dangled like a tassel at the west end of it, while the hawkers were shouting a confession the culprit had never heard of.”

“I am afraid,” said I, “if I might presume to give my opinion, it would be a tale of unvaried sorrow and guilt.”

“Not entirely, my friend,” said Hardie; “a prison is a world within itself, and has its own business, griefs, and joys, peculiar to its circle. Its inmates are sometimes short-lived, but so are soldiers on service; they are poor relatively to the world without, but there are degrees of wealth and poverty among them, and some are relatively rich also. They cannot stir abroad, but neither can the garrison of a besieged fort, or the crew of a ship at sea; and they are not under a

3. A proverb dating back to medieval times.
4. I.e., has been hanged.
5. Sellers of broadsides supposedly reporting the condemned criminal’s confession.
dispensation quite so desperate as either, for they may have as much food as they
have money to buy, and are not obliged to work whether they have food or not.”

“But what variety of incident,” said I (not without a secret view to my present
task), “could possibly be derived from such a work as you are pleased to talk of?”

“Infinite,” replied the young advocate. “Whatever of guilt, crime, imposture,
folly, unheard-of misfortunes, and unlooked-for change of fortune, can be
found to chequer life, my Last Speech of the Tolbooth should illustrate with
eamples sufficient to gorge even the public’s all-devouring appetite for the
wonderful and horrible. The inventor of fictitious narratives has to rack his
brains for means to diversify his tale, and after all can hardly hit upon charac-
ters or incidents which have not been used again and again, until they are
familiar to the eye of the reader, so that the development, *enlèvement,* the
desperate wound of which the hero never dies, the burning fever from which
the heroine is sure to recover, become a mere matter of course. I join with my
honest friend Crabbe, and have an unlucky propensity to hope when hope is
lost, and to rely upon the cork-jacket, which carries the heroes of romance safe
through all the billows of affliction.” He then declaimed the following passage,
rather with too much than too little emphasis:

> “Much have I fear’d, but am no more afraid,
> When some chaste beauty, by some wretch betray’d,
> Is drawn away with such distracted speed,
> That she anticipates a dreadful deed.
> Not so do I—Let solid walls impound
> The captive fair, and dig a moat around;
> Let there be brazen locks and bars of steel,
> And keepers cruel, such as never feel;
> With not a single note the purse supply,
> And when she begs, let men and maids deny;
> Be windows there from which she dares not fall,
> And help so distant, ’tis in vain to call;
> Still means of freedom will some Power devise,
> And from the baffled ruffian snatch his prize.”

“The end of uncertainty,” he concluded, “is the death of interest; and hence
it happens that no one now reads novels.”

“Hear him, ye gods!” returned his companion. “I assure you, Mr. Pattieson,
you will hardly visit this learned gentleman, but you are likely to find the new
novel most in repute lying on his table,—snugly intrenched, however, beneath
Stair’s *Institutes,* or an open volume of Morrison’s *Decisions.*”

“Oh I deny it?” said the hopeful jurisconsult, “or wherefore should I, since
it is well known these Dalilahs seduce my wisers and my betters? May they not
be found lurking amongst the multiplied memorials of our most distinguished
counsel, and even peeping from under the cushion of a judge’s armchair? Our
seniors at the bar, within the bar, and even on the bench, read novels; and, if
not belied, some of them have written novels into the bargain. I only say, that
I read from habit and from indolence, not from real interest; that, like Ancient
Pistol devouring his leek, I read and swear till I get to the end of the narrative.
But not so in the real records of human vagaries—not so in the State Trials, or

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7. George Crabbe’s *The Borough* (1810), letter
20, lines 78–91.
8. Standard treatises on Scottish law.
9. Misrepresented, described falsely.
1. The Welshman Fluellen makes the bombastic
Pistol eat a leek, the national emblem of Wales, in
Shakespeare’s *Henry V* 5.1.
in the Books of Adjournal, where every now and then you read new pages of the human heart, and turns of fortune far beyond what the boldest novelist ever attempted to produce from the coinage of his brain."

“And for such narratives,” I asked, “you suppose the History of the Prison of Edinburgh might afford appropriate materials?”

“In a degree unusually ample, my dear sir,” said Hardie—“Fill your glass, however, in the meanwhile. Was it not for many years the place in which the Scottish parliament met? Was it not James’s² place of refuge, when the mob, inflamed by a seditious preacher, broke forth on him with the cries of ‘The sword of the Lord and of Gideon—bring forth the wicked Haman’?³ Since that time how many hearts have throbbed within these walls, as the tolling of the neighbouring bell announced to them how fast the sands of their life were ebbing; how many must have sunk at the sound—how many were supported by stubborn pride and dogged resolution—how many by the consolations of religion? Have there not been some, who, looking back on the motives of their crimes, were scarce able to understand how they should have had such temptation as to seduce them from virtue? and have there not, perhaps, been others, who, sensible of their innocence, were divided between indignation at the undeserved doom which they were to undergo, consciousness that they had not deserved it, and racking anxiety to discover some way in which they might yet vindicate themselves? Do you suppose any of these deep, powerful, and agitating feelings, can be recorded and perused without exciting a corresponding depth of deep, powerful, and agitating interest?—O! do but wait till I publish the Causes Célèbres of Caledonia,⁴ and you will find no want of a novel or a tragedy for some time to come. The true thing will triumph over the brightest inventions of the most ardent imagination. Magna est veritas, et praevalebit.”⁵

“I have understood,” said I, encouraged by the affability of my rattling entertainer, “that less of this interest must attach to Scottish jurisprudence than to that of any other country. The general morality of our people, their sober and prudent habits—”

“Secure them,” said the barrister, “against any great increase of professional thieves and depredators, but not against wild and wayward starts of fancy and passion, producing crimes of an extraordinary description, which are precisely those to the detail of which we listen with thrilling interest. England has been much longer a highly civilized country; her subjects have been very strictly amendable to laws administered without fear or favor, a complete division of labor has taken place among her subjects, and the very thieves and robbers form a distinct class in society, subdivided among themselves according to the subject of their depredations, and the mode in which they carry them on, acting upon regular habits and principles, which can be calculated and anticipated at Bow Street, Hatton Garden, or the Old Bailey.⁶ Our sister kingdom is like a cultivated field,—the farmer expects that, in spite of all his care, a certain number of weeds will rise with the corn, and can tell you beforehand their names and appearance. But Scotland is like one of her own Highland glens, and the moralist who reads the records of her criminal jurisprudence, will find as many curious anomalous facts in the history of mind, as the botanist will detect rare specimens among her dingles⁷ and cliffs.”

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2. The unpopular, autocratic James II (1633–1701).
3. The mob was conflating Judges 7.20 (“The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon”) and Esther 3–9 (the wicked Haman).
4. Famous cases of Scotland.
5. From the Apocrypha in the Vulgate (the Latin Bible), 1 Esdras 4.41: “The truth is powerful, and will prevail.”
7. Wooded valleys.
“And that’s all the good you have obtained from three perusals of the Commentaries on Scottish Criminal Jurisprudence?” said his companion. “I suppose the learned author very little thinks that the facts which his erudition and acuteness have accumulated for the illustration of legal doctrines, might be so arranged as to form a sort of appendix to the half-bound and slip-shod volumes of the circulating library.”

“I’ll bet you a pint of claret,” said the elder lawyer, “that he will not feel sore at the comparison. But as we say at the bar, ‘I beg I may not be interrupted’; I have much more to say upon my Scottish collection of Causes Célèbres. You will please recollect the scope and motive given for the contrivance and execution of many extraordinary and daring crimes, by the long civil dissensions of Scotland—by the hereditary jurisdictions, which, until 1748, rested the investigation of crimes in judges, ignorant, partial, or interested—by the habits of the gentry, shut up in their distant and solitary mansion-houses, nursing their revengeful passions just to keep their blood from stagnating—not to mention that amiable national qualification, called the *perfervidum ingenium Sco- torum*, which our lawyers join in alleging as a reason for the severity of some of our enactments. When I come to treat of matters so mysterious, deep, and dangerous, as these circumstances have given rise to, the blood of each reader shall be curdled, and his epidermis crisped into goose skin.—But, hist!—here comes the landlord, with tidings, I suppose, that the chaise is ready.”

It was no such thing—the tidings bore, that no chaise could be had that evening, for Sir Peter Plyem had carried forward my landlord’s two pairs of horses that morning to the ancient royal borough of Bubbleburgh, to look after his interest there. But as Bubbleburgh is only one of a set of five boroughs which club their shares9 for a member of parliament, Sir Peter’s adversary had judiciously watched his departure, in order to commence a canvass in the no less royal borough of Bitem, which, as all the world knows, lies at the very termination of Sir Peter’s avenue, and has been held in leading-strings1 by him and his ancestors for time immemorial. Now Sir Peter was thus placed in the situation of an ambitious monarch, who, after having commenced a daring inroad into his enemies’ territories, is suddenly recalled by an invasion of his own hereditary dominions. He was obliged in consequence to return from the half-won borough of Bubbleburgh, to look after the half-lost borough of Bitem, and the two pairs of horses which had carried him that morning to Bubbleburgh, were now forcibly detained to transport him, his agent, his valet, his jester, and his hard-drinker, across the country to Bitem. The cause of this detention, which to me was of as little consequence as it may be to the reader, was important enough to my companions to reconcile them to the delay. Like eagles, they smelled the battle afar off, ordered a magnum of claret and beds at the Wallace, and entered at full career into the Bubbleburgh and Bitem politics, with all the probable “petitions and complaints” to which they were likely to give rise.

In the midst of an anxious, animated, and, to me, most unintelligible discussion, concerning provosts, bailies, deacons, sets of boroughs, leets, town-clerks, burgesses resident and non-resident,2 all of a sudden the lawyer recollected himself. “Poor Dunover, we must not forget him”; and the landlord was dispatched in quest of the *pauvre honteux*,3 with an earnestly civil invitation to him for the rest of the evening. I could not help asking the young gentlemen if

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8. The treacherous disposition of the Scots (Latin).
9. I.e., combine their votes (to elect a candidate).
1. In a state of dependence.
3. Pauper who is ashamed to beg.
they knew the history of this poor man; and the counsellor applied himself to his pocket to recover the memorial or brief from which he had stated his cause.

“He has been a candidate for our *remedium miserabile*,” said Mr. Hardie, “commonly called a *cessio bonorum*.” As there are divines who have doubted the eternity of future punishments, so the Scotch lawyers seem to have thought that the crime of poverty might be atoned for by something short of perpetual imprisonment. After a month’s confinement, you must know, a prisoner for debt is entitled, on a sufficient statement to our Supreme Court, setting forth the amount of his funds, and the nature of his misfortunes, and surrendering all his effects to his creditors, to claim to be discharged from prison.”

“I had heard,” I replied, “of such a humane regulation.”

“Yes,” said Halkit, “and the beauty of it is, as the foreign fellow said, you may get the *cessio* when the *bonorum* are all spent—but what, are you puzzling in your pockets to seek your only memorial among old play-bills, letters requesting a meeting of the Faculty, rules of the Speculative Society, syllabus’ of lectures—all the miscellaneous contents of a young advocate’s pocket, which contains every thing but briefs and bank notes? Can you not state a case of *cessio* without your memorial? Why, it is done every Saturday. The events follow each other as regularly as clock-work, and one form of condescendence might suit every one of them.”

“This is very unlike the variety of distress which this gentleman stated to fall under the consideration of your judges,” said I.

“True,” replied Halkit; “but Hardie spoke of criminal jurisprudence, and this business is purely civil. I could plead a *cessio* myself without the inspiring honours of a gown and three-tailed periwig—Listen.—My client was bred a journeyman weaver—made some little money—took a farm—(for conducting a farm, like driving a gig, comes by nature)—late severe times—induced to sign bills with a friend, for which he received no value—landlord sequestrates—creditors accept a composition—pursuer sets up a public-house—fails a second time—is incarcerated for a debt of ten pounds, seven shillings and sixpence—his debts amount to blank—his losses to blank—his funds to blank—leaving a balance of blank in his favor. There is no opposition; your lordships will please grant commission to take his oath.”

Hardie now renounced this ineffectual search, in which there was perhaps a little affectation, and told us the tale of poor Dunover’s distresses, with a tone in which a degree of feeling, which he seemed ashamed of as unprofessional, mingled with his attempts at wit, and did him more honor. It was one of those tales which seem to argue a sort of ill-luck or fatality attached to the hero. A well-informed, industrious, and blameless, but poor and bashful man, had in vain essayed all the usual means by which others acquire independence, yet had never succeeded beyond the attainment of bare subsistence. During a brief gleam of hope, rather than of actual prosperity, he had added a wife and family to his cares, but the dawn was speedily overcast. Everything retrograded with him towards the verge of the miry Slough of Despond, which yawns for insolvent debtors; and after catching at each twig, and experiencing the protracted agony of feeling them one by one elude his grasp, he actually sunk into the miry pit whence he had been extricated by the professional exertions of Hardie.

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4. In Roman and old Scots law, the surrender of all one’s property to creditors (to avoid imprisonment for debt). “*Remedium miserable*”: sad remedy (Latin).

5. The gown and wig that Halkit wears in court.

6. From John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.
“And, I suppose, now you have dragged this poor devil ashore, you will leave him half naked on the beach to provide for himself?” said Halkit. “Hark ye,”—and he whispered something in his ear, of which the penetrating and insinuating words, “Interest with my Lord,” alone reached mine. “It is pessimi exempli,” said Hardie, laughing, “to provide for a ruined client; but I was thinking of what you mention, provided it can be managed—But hush! here he comes.”

The recent relation of the poor man’s misfortunes had given him, I was pleased to observe, a claim to the attention and respect of the young men, who treated him with great civility, and gradually engaged him in a conversation, which, much to my satisfaction, again turned upon the Causes Célèbres of Scotland. Emboldened by the kindness with which he was treated, Mr. Dunover began to contribute his share to the amusement of the evening. Jails, like other places, have their ancient traditions, known only to the inhabitants, and handed down from one set of the melancholy lodgers to the next who occupy their cells. Some of these, which Dunover mentioned, were interesting, and served to illustrate the narratives of remarkable trials, which Hardie had at his finger ends, and which his companion was also well skilled in. This sort of conversation passed away the evening till the early hour when Mr. Dunover chose to retire to rest, and I also retreated to take down memorandums of what I had learned, in order to add another narrative to those which it had been my chief amusement to collect, and to write out in detail. The two young men ordered a broiled bone, Madeira negus, and a pack of cards, and commenced a game at picquet.

Next morning the travelers left Gandercleugh. I afterwards learned from the papers that both have been since engaged in the great political cause of Bubbleburgh and Bitem, a summary case, and entitled to particular dispatch; but which, it is thought, nevertheless, may outlast the duration of the parliament to which the contest refers. Mr. Halkit, as the newspapers informed me, acts as agent or solicitor; and Mr. Hardie opened for Sir Peter Plyem with singular ability, and to such good purpose, that I understand he has since had fewer play-bills and more briefs in his pocket. And both the young gentlemen deserve their good fortune; for I learned from Dunover, who called on me some weeks afterwards, and communicated the intelligence with tears in his eyes, that their interest had availed to obtain him a small office for the decent maintenance of his family; and that, after a train of constant and uninterrupted misfortune, he could trace a dawn of prosperity to his having the good fortune to be flung from the top of a mail-coach into the river Gander, in company with an advocate and a writer to the signet. The reader will not perhaps deem himself equally obliged to the accident, since it brings upon him the following narrative, founded upon the conversation of the evening.

1818

7. The worst of examples (Latin).
8. A card game for two players. “Madeira negus”: a mixture of wine (here, Madeira), hot water, sugar, nutmeg, and lemons.
9. I.e., with a barrister (Hardie) and the highest grade of legal solicitor (Halkit).
Lochinvar

O young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He staid not for brake, and he stopp’d not for stone,
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he enter’d the Netherby Hall,
Among bride’s men, and kinsmen, and brothers and all:
Then spoke the bride’s father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,)
“O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?”

“I long woo’d your daughter, my suit you denied;—
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.”

The bride kiss’d the goblet: the knight took it up,
He quaff’d off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She look’d down to blush, and she look’d up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
“Now tread we a measure!” said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard2 did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whisper’d, “’Twere better by far
To have match’d our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.”

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reach’d the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe3 the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
“She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;”
They’ll have fleet steeds that follow,” quoth young Lochinvar.

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1. An inset poem in the long narrative poem Marmion.
2. A man of courage and spirit.
3. The rump of the horse.
There was mounting ’mong Graemes of the Netherby clan; 
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran: 
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee, 
But the lost bride of Netherby ne’er did they see. 
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war, 
Have ye e’er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

Jock of Hazeldean

“Why weep ye by the tide, ladie? 
Why weep ye by the tide? 
I’ll wed ye to my youngest son, 
And ye sall be his bride: 
And ye sall be his bride, ladie, 
Sae comely to be seen”—
But ay she loot the tears down fa’ 
For Jock of Hazeldean.

“Now let this willfu’ grief be done, 
And dry that cheek so pale; 
Young Frank is chief of Errington 
And lord of Langley Dale; 
His step is first in peaceful ha’, 
His sword in battle keen”—
But ay she loot the tears down fa’ 
For Jock of Hazeldean.

“A chain of gold ye sall not lack, 
Nor braid to bind your hair; 
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk, trained 
Nor palfrey fresh and fair; 
And you, the foremost o’ them a’, 
Shall ride our forest queen”—
But ay she loot the tears down fa’ 
For Jock of Hazeldean.

The kirk was decked at morningtide, 
The tapers glimmered fair; 
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride, 
And dame and knight are there. 
They sought her baith by bower and ha’; 
The ladie was not seen! 
She’s o’er the Border and awa’ 
Wi’ Jock of Hazeldean.

1. The first stanza is from a traditional Scottish ballad.
The Two Drovers

Chapter I

It was the day after Doune Fair¹ when my story commences. It had been a brisk market, several dealers had attended from the northern and midland counties in England, and English money had flown so merrily about as to gladden the hearts of the Highland farmers. Many large droves were about to set off for England, under the protection of their owners, or of the topsmen whom they employed in the tedious, laborious, and responsible office of driving the cattle for many hundred miles, from the market where they had been purchased to the fields or farm-yards where they were to be fattened for the shambles.²

The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war. It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion. They are required to know perfectly the drove-roads, which lie over the wildest tracts of the country, and to avoid as much as possible the highways, which distress the feet of the bullocks, and the turnpikes, which annoy the spirit of the drover; whereas on the broad green or grey track, which leads across the pathless moor, the herd not only move at ease and without taxation, but, if they mind their business, may pick up a mouthful of food by the way. At night, the drovers usually sleep along with their cattle, let the weather be what it will; and many of these hardy men do not once rest under a roof during a journey on foot from Lochaber to Lincolnshire.³ They are paid very highly, for the trust reposed is of the last importance, as it depends on their prudence, vigilance, and honesty whether the cattle reach the final market in good order, and afford a profit to the grazier. But, as they maintain themselves at their own expense, they are especially economical in that particular. At the period we speak of, a Highland drover was victualled for his long and toilsome journey with a few handfuls of oatmeal and two or three onions, renewed from time to time, and a ram’s horn filled with whisky, which he used regularly, but sparingly, every night and morning. His dirk, or skene-dhu (i.e. black-knife), so worn as to be concealed beneath the arm or by the folds of the plaid, was his only weapon, excepting the cudgel with which he directed the movements of the cattle. A Highlander was never so happy as on these occasions. There was a variety in the whole journey which exercised the Celt’s natural curiosity and love of motion; there were the constant change of place and scene, the petty adventures incidental to the traffic, and the intercourse with the various farmers, graziers, and traders, intermingled with occasional merry-makings, not the less acceptable to Donald⁴ that they were void of expense; and there was the consciousness of superior skill, for the Highlander, a child amongst flocks, is a prince amongst herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd’s slothful life, so that he feels himself nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian.

Of the number who left Doune in the morning, and with the purpose we have described, not a glunamie⁵ of them all cocked his bonnet more briskly, or

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1. A cattle market held annually in early November. Doune, in Perthshire, was the town where in the 18th and early 19th centuries drovers from the Western Isles and northwest Highlands of Scotland would meet before driving their cattle to England.
2. Slaughterhouse.
4. A common Highland name, hence a generic term for Highlander.
5. Highlander.
gartered his tartan hose under knee over a pair of more promising spiogs (legs),
than did Robin Oig M’Combich, called familiarly Robin Oig—that is, Young,
or the Lesser, Robin. Though small of stature, as the epithet Oig implies, and
not very strongly limbed, he was as light and alert as one of the deer of his
mountains. He had an elasticity of step, which in the course of a long march
made many a stout fellow envy him; and the manner in which he busked\(^6\) his
plaid and adjusted his bonnet argued a consciousness that so smart a John
Highlandman as himself would not pass unnoticed among the Lowland lasses.
The ruddy cheek, red lips, and white teeth set off a countenance which had
 gained by exposure to the weather a healthful and hardy rather than a rugged
hue. If Robin Oig did not laugh, or even smile frequently, as indeed is not the
practice among his countrymen, his bright eyes usually gleamed from under his
bonnet with an expression of cheerfulness ready to be turned into mirth.

The departure of Robin Oig was an incident in the little town, in and near
which he had many friends, male and female. He was a topping person in his
way, transacted considerable business on his own behalf, and was entrusted by
the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that dis-
trict. He might have increased his business to any extent had he condescended
to manage it by deputy; but except a lad or two, sister’s sons of his own, Robin
rejected the idea of assistance, conscious, perhaps, how much his reputation
depended upon his attending in person to the practical discharge of his duty
in every instance. He remained, therefore, contented with the highest premium
given to persons of his description, and comforted himself with the hopes that
a few journeys to England might enable him to conduct business on his own
account, in a manner becoming his birth. For Robin Oig’s father, Lachlan
M’Combich (or son of my friend, his actual clan-surname being M’Gregor), had
been so called by the celebrated Rob Roy,\(^7\) because of the particular friendship
which had subsisted between the grandsire of Robin and that renowned cat-
eran.\(^8\) Some people even say that Robin Oig derived his Christian name from
one as renowned in the wilds of Loch Lomond as ever was his namesake Robin
Hood in the precincts of merry Sherwood. “Of such ancestry,” as James
Boswell says, “who would not be proud?” Robin Oig was proud accordingly; but
his frequent visits to England and to the Lowlands had given him tact enough
to know that pretensions which still gave him a little right to distinction in his
own lonely glen might be both obnoxious and ridiculous if preferred elsewhere.
The pride of birth, therefore, was like the miser’s treasure, the secret subject
of his contemplation, but never exhibited to strangers as a subject of boasting.

Many were the words of gratulation and good-luck which were bestowed on
Robin Oig. The judges commended his drove, especially Robin’s own property,
which were the best of them. Some thrust out their snuff-mulls for the part-
ing pinch—others tendered the doch-an-dorrach,\(^9\) or parting cup. All cried—
“Good-luck travel out with you and come home with you.—Give you luck in
the Saxon market—brave notes in the leabhar-dhu” (black pocket-book), “and
plenty of English gold in the sporran” (pouch of goat-skin).

The bonny lasses made their adieus more modestly, and more than one, it
was said, would have given her best brooch to be certain that it was upon her
that his eye last rested as he turned towards the road.

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6. Put on, arranged.
7. Rob Roy MacGregor (1671–1734), the cele-
brated Highland freebooter, who figures promi-
nently in Scott’s novel Rob Roy (1817).
8. Highland marauder.
9. Properly Gaelic deoch an doruis, literally “drink
at the door,” i.e., stirrup-cup. “Snuff-mulls”: snuff-
boxes.
Robin Oig had just given the preliminary “Hoo-hoo!” to urge forward the loiterers of the drove, when there was a cry behind him.

“Stay, Robin—hide a blink. Here is Janet of Tomahourich—auld Janet, your father’s sister.”

“Plague on her, for an auld Highland witch and spaewife,” said a farmer from the Carse of Stirling; “she’ll cast some of her cantrips¹ on the cattle.”

“She canna do that,” said another sapient of the same profession—“Robin Oig is no the lad to leave any of them, without tying St. Mungo’s knot on their tails, and that will put to her speed the best witch that ever flew over Dimayet² upon a broomstick.”

It may not be indifferent to the reader to know that the Highland cattle are peculiarly liable to be taken, or infected, by spells and witchcraft, which judicious people guard against by knitting knots of peculiar complexity on the tuft of hair which terminates the animal’s tail.

But the old woman who was the object of the farmer’s suspicion seemed only busied about the drover, without paying any attention to the drove. Robin, on the contrary, appeared rather impatient of her presence.

“What auld-world fancy,” he said, “has brought you so early from the ingle-side this morning, Muhme? I am sure I bid you good-even, and had your god-speed, last night.”

“And left me more siller⁷ than the useless old woman will use till you come back again, bird of my bosom,” said the sibyl. “But it is little I would care for the food that nourishes me, or the fire that warms me, or for God’s blessed sun itself, if aught but weal should happen to the grandson of my father. So let me walk the deisil³ round you, that you may go safe out into the far foreign land, and come safe home.”

Robin Oig stopped, half embarrassed, half laughing, and signing to those around that he only complied with the old woman to soothe her humour. In the meantime she traced around him, with wavering steps, the propitiation, which some have thought has been derived from the Druidical mythology. It consists, as is well known, in the person who makes the deisil walking three times round the person who is the object of the ceremony, taking care to move according to the course of the sun. At once, however, she stopped short, and exclaimed, in a voice of alarm and horror, “Grandson of my father, there is blood on your hand.”

“Hush, for God’s sake, aunt,” said Robin Oig; “you will bring more trouble on yourself with this Taishataragh” (second sight) “than you will be able to get out of for many a day.”

The old woman only repeated, with a ghastly look, “There is blood on your hand, and it is English blood. The blood of the Gael is richer and redder. Let us see—let us”—

Ere Robin Oig could prevent her, which, indeed, could only have been by positive violence, so hasty and peremptory were her proceedings, she had drawn from his side the dirk which lodged in the folds of his plaid, and held it up, exclaiming, although the weapon gleamed clear and bright in the sun,
“Blood, blood—Saxon blood again. Robin Oig M’Combich, go not this day to England!”

“Prutt, trutt,” answered Robin Oig, “that will never do neither—it would be next thing to running the country. For shame, Muhme—give me the dirk. You cannot tell by the colour the difference betwixt the blood of a black bullock and a white one, and you speak of knowing Saxon from Gaelic blood. All men have their blood from Adam, Muhme. Give me my skene-dhu, and let me go on my road. I should have been halfway to Stirling brig by this time—Give me my dirk, and let me go.”

“Never will I give it to you,” said the old woman—“Never will I quit my hold on your plaid, unless you promise me not to wear that unhappy weapon.”

The women around him urged him also, saying few of his aunt’s words fell to the ground; and as the Lowland famers continued to look moodily on the scene, Robin Oig determined to close it at any sacrifice.

“Well, then,” said the young drover, giving the scabbard of the weapon to Hugh Morrison, “you Lowlanders care nothing for these freats. Keep my dirk for me. I cannot give it you, because it was my father’s; but your drove follows ours, and I am content it should be in your keeping, not in mine.—Will this do, Muhme?”

“It must,” said the old woman—“that is, if the Lowlander is mad enough to carry the knife.”

The strong westlandman laughed aloud.

“Goodwife,” said he, “I am Hugh Morrison from Glenae, come of the Manly Morrisons of auld langsyne, that never took short weapon against a man in their lives. And neither needed they: they had their broadswords, and I have this bit supple,” showing a formidable cudgel—“for dirking ower the board, ‘I leave that to John Highlandman.—Ye needna snort, none of you Highlanders, and you in especial, Robin. I’ll keep the bit knife, if you are feared for the auld spaewife’s tale, and give it back to you whenever you want it.”

Robin was not particularly pleased with some part of Hugh Morrison’s speech; but he had learned in his travels more patience than belonged to his Highland constitution originally, and he accepted the service of the descendant of the Manly Morrisons, without finding fault with the rather depreciating manner in which it was offered.

“If he had not had his morning in his head, and been but a Dumfriesshire hog into the boot, he would have spoken more like a gentleman. But you cannot have more of a sow than a grumph. It’s shame my father’s knife should ever slash a haggis for the like of him.”

Thus saying (but saying it in Gaelic), Robin drove on his cattle, and waved farewell to all behind him. He was in the greater haste, because he expected to join at Falkirk a comrade and brother in profession, with whom he proposed to travel in company.

Robin Oig’s chosen friend was a young Englishman, Harry Wakefield by name, well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. He was nearly six feet high, gallantly formed to keep the rounds at Smithfield, or maintain the ring at a

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1. I.e., she did not speak idly.
2. Superstitious beliefs or customs.
3. Old long since, i.e., long ago.
4. A young sheep.
5. A Scottish pudding made of minced heart, liver, and lungs of a calf or sheep, boiled with oatmeal and seasonings. “Grumph”: a grunt from an animal.
6. A town in south-central Scotland and scene of an important cattle, sheep, and horse fair held three times a year.
7. In London, famous for its cattle and meat market; also a site of boxing and wrestling.
wrestling-match; and although he might have been overmatched, perhaps, among the regular professors of the Fancy, yet, as a yokel or rustic, or a chance customer, he was able to give a bellyful to any amateur of the pugilistic art. Doncaster races saw him in his glory, betting his guinea, and generally successfully; nor was there a main fought in Yorkshire, the feeders being persons of celebrity, at which he was not to be seen, if business permitted. But though a sprack lad, and fond of pleasure and its haunts, Harry Wakefield was steady, and not the cautious Robin Oig M’Combich himself was more attentive to the main chance. His holidays were holidays indeed; but his days of work were dedicated to steady and persevering labour. In countenance and temper Wakefield was the model of Old England’s merry yeomen, whose clothyard shafts, in so many hundred battles, asserted her superiority over the nations, and whose good sabres, in our own time, are her cheapest and most assured defence. His mirth was readily excited; for, strong in limb and constitution, and fortunate in circumstances, he was disposed to be pleased with everything about him; and such difficulties as he might occasionally encounter were, to a man of his energy, rather matter of amusement than serious annoyance. With all the merits of a sanguine temper, our young English drover was not without his defects. He was irascible, sometimes to the verge of being quarrelsome; and perhaps not the less inclined to bring his disputes to a pugilistic decision, because he found few antagonists able to stand up to him in the boxing-ring.

It is difficult to say how Harry Wakefield and Robin Oig first became intimates; but it is certain a close acquaintance had taken place betwixt them, although they had apparently few common subjects of conversation or of interest, so soon as their talk ceased to be of bullocks. Robin Oig, indeed, spoke the English language rather imperfectly upon any other topics but stots and kyloes, and Harry Wakefield could never bring his broad Yorkshire tongue to utter a single word of Gaelic. It was in vain Robin spent a whole morning, during a walk over Minch Moor, in attempting to teach his companion to utter, with true precision, the shibboleth _Llhu_, which is the Gaelic for a calf. From Traquair to Murder-cairn the hill rang with the discordant attempts of the Saxon upon the unmanageable monosyllable, and the heartfelt laugh which followed every failure. They had, however, better modes of awakening the echoes; for Wakefield could sing many a ditty to the praise of Moll, Susan, and Cicely, and Robin Oig had a particular gift at whistling interminable pibrochs through all their involutions, and—what was more agreeable to his companion’s southern ear—knew many of the northern airs, both lively and pathetic, to which Wakefield learned to pipe a bass. Thus, though Robin could hardly have comprehended his companion’s stories about horse-racing and cock-fighting or fox-hunting, and although his own legends of clan-fights and _creaghs_, varied with talk of Highland goblins and fairy folk, would have been caviare to his companion, they contrived nevertheless to find a degree of pleasure in each other’s company, which had for three years back induced them to join company and travel together, when the direction of their journey permitted. Each, indeed, found his advantage in this companionship; for where could

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8. I.e., experts in boxing.
1. Lively.
2. Yard-long arrows.
4. The Gaelic for a calf is actually _laogh_ (the Gaelic _l_ before _a, o, or u_ represents a sound that does not exist in English). “Shibboleth”: a word difficult for nonnative speakers to pronounce (Judges 12.4-6).
5. Bagpipe tunes.
6. Highland forays or raids (Gaelic _creach_, plunder).
7. I.e., too strange or exotic (from _Hamlet_ 2.2.437: “caviare to the general”).
the Englishman have found a guide through the Western Highlands like Robin Oig M’Combich? and when they were on what Harry called the right side of the Border, his patronage, which was extensive, and his purse, which was heavy, were at all times at the service of his Highland friend, and on many occasions his liberality did him genuine yeoman’s service.

Chapter II

Were ever two such loving friends!
How could they disagree?
Oh, thus it was, he loved him dear,
And thought how to requite him,
And having no friend left but he,
He did resolve to fight him.

_Duke upon Duke._

The pair of friends had traversed with their usual cordiality the grassy wilds of Liddesdale, and crossed the opposite part of Cumberland, emphatically called the Waste. In these solitary regions the cattle under the charge of our drovers derived their subsistence chiefly by picking their food as they went along the drove road, or sometimes by the tempting opportunity of a start and overloup, or invasion of the neighbouring pasture, where an occasion presented itself. But now the scene changed before them; they were descending towards a fertile and enclosed country, where no such liberties could be taken with impunity, or without a previous arrangement and bargain with the possessors of the ground. This was more especially the case, as a great northern fair was upon the eve of taking place, where both the Scotch and English drover expected to dispose of a part of their cattle, which it was desirable to produce in the market rested and in good order. Fields were therefore difficult to be obtained, and only upon high terms. This necessity occasioned a temporary separation betwixt the two friends, who went to bargain, each as he could, for the separate accommodation of his herd. Unhappily it chanced that both of them, unknown to each other, thought of bargaining for the ground they wanted on the property of a country gentleman of some fortune, whose estate lay in the neighbourhood. The English drover applied to the bailiff on the property, who was known to him. It chanced that the Cumbrian Squire, who had entertained some suspicions of his manager’s honesty, was taking occasional measures to ascertain how far they were well founded, and had desired that any inquiries about his enclosures, with a view to occupy them for a temporary purpose, should be referred to himself. As, however, Mr. Ireby had gone the day before upon a journey of some miles distance to the northward, the bailiff chose to consider the check upon his full powers as for the time removed, and concluded that he should best consult his master’s interest, and perhaps his own, in making an agreement with Harry Wakefield. Meanwhile, ignorant of what his comrade was doing, Robin Oig, on his side, chanced to be overtaken by a good-looking smart little man upon a pony, most knowingly hogged and cropped, as was then the fashion, the rider wearing tight leather breeches and

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8. A poem somewhat uncertainly ascribed to Alexander Pope. Scott had come across it while researching for his edition of Swift.
9. In the southwest Scottish Border country, from which they crossed into Cumberland in northwest England.
1. “The trespassing of animals on a neighbour’s land, in which a certain limited latitude was permissible” (_Concise Scots Dictionary_).
2. With mane and hair around the ears cut short.
long-necked bright spurs. This cavalier asked one or two pertinent questions about the markets and the price of stock. So Robin, seeing him a well-judging civil gentleman, took the freedom to ask him whether he could let him know if there was any grass-land to be let in that neighbourhood, for the temporary accommodation of his drove. He could not have put the question to more willing ears. The gentleman of the buckskins was the proprietor, with whose bailiff Harry Wakefield had dealt, or was in the act of dealing.

"Thou art in good luck, my canny Scot," said Mr. Ireby, "to have spoken to me, for I see thy cattle have done their day's work, and I have at my disposal the only field within three miles that is to be let in these parts."

"The drove can pe gang two, three, four miles very pratty weil indeed," said the cautious Highlander; "put what would his honour pe axing for the peasnts pe the head, if she was to tak the park for twa or three days?"

"We won't differ, Sawney, if you let me have six stots for winterers, in the way of reason."

"And which peasnts wad your honour pe for having?"

"Why—let me see—the two black—the dun one—yon doddy—him with the twisted horn—the brockit—How much by the head?"

"Ah," said Robin, "your honour is a shudge—a real shudge—I couldna have set off the pest six peasnts petter mysell, me that ken them as if they were my pairns, puir things."

"Well, how much per head, Sawney," continued Mr. Ireby.

"It was high markets at Doune and Falkirk," answered Robin.

And thus the conversation proceeded, until they had agreed on the *prix juste* for the bullocks, the squire throwing in the temporary accommodation of the enclosure for the cattle into the boot, and Robin making, as he thought, a very good bargain, provided the grass was but tolerable. The squire walked his pony alongside of the drove, partly to show him the way and see him put into possession of the field, and partly to learn the latest news of the northern markets.

They arrived at the field, and the pasture seemed excellent. But what was their surprise when they saw the bailiff quietly inducing the cattle of Harry Wakefield into the grassy Goshen which had just been assigned to those of Robin Oig M'Combich by the proprietor himself! Squire Ireby set spurs to his horse, dashed up to his servant, and, learning what had passed between the parties, briefly informed the English drover that his bailiff had let the ground without his authority, and that he might seek grass for his cattle wherever he would, since he was to get none there. At the same time he rebuked his servant severely for having transgressed his commands, and ordered him instantly to assist in ejecting the hungry and weary cattle of Harry Wakefield, which were just beginning to enjoy a meal of unusual plenty, and to introduce those of his comrade, whom the English drover now began to consider as a rival.

The feelings which arose in Wakefield's mind would have induced him to resist Mr. Ireby's decision; but every Englishman has a tolerably accurate sense of law and justice, and John Fleecebumpkin, the bailiff, having acknowledged

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3. This paragraph shows Scott's rather crude rendering of English as spoken by a Gaelic speaker: "The drove can be going..." The use of *p* for *b* and of *she* for *I* is a common feature of this pseudo-Gaelic English. *Park*: field.

4. Farm animals kept for fattening over the winter. "Sawney": short for "Alexander," a common Scots name, hence a generic name for a Scot.

5. Having a white streak down its face. "Doddy": a cow or bull with horns that have been blunted or cut off.


7. Proper price (French).

8. Fertile land (Genesis 47.27).
that he had exceeded his commission, Wakefield saw nothing else for it than
to collect his hungry and disappointed charge, and drive them on to seek quar-
ters elsewhere. Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened
to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But
Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, “Take it all,
man—take it all—never make two bites of a cherry—thou canst talk over the
gentry, and blear a plain man's eye—Out upon you, man—I would not kiss any
man's dirty latches⁹ for leave to bake in his oven.”

Robin Oig, sorry but not surprised at his comrade's displeasure, hastened
to entreat his friend to wait but an hour till he had gone to the squire's house to
receive payment for the cattle he had sold, and he would come back and help him
to drive the cattle into some convenient place of rest, and explain to him the
whole mistake they had both of them fallen into. But the Englishman continued
indignant: “Thou hast been selling, hast thou? Ay, ay—thou is a cunning lad for
kennng the hours of bargaining. Go to the devil with thyself, for I will ne'er see
thy false loon's¹ visage again—thou should be ashamed to look me in the face.”

“I am ashamed to look no man in the face,” said Robin Oig, something
moved; “and, moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will
bide at the clachan² down yonder.”

“Mayhap you had as well keep away,” said his comrade; and, turning his back
on his former friend, he collected his unwilling associates, assisted by the
bailiff, who took some real and some affected interest in seeing Wakefield
accommodated.

After spending some time in negotiating with more than one of the neigh-
bouring farmers, who could not, or would not, afford the accommodation
desired, Harry Wakefield at last, and in his necessity, accomplished his point
by means of the landlord of the alehouse at which Robin Oig and he had agreed
to pass the night, when they first separated from each other. Mine host was
content to let him turn his cattle on a piece of barren moor, at a price little less
than the bailiff had asked for the disputed enclosure; and the wretchedness of
the pasture, as well as the price paid for it, were set down as exaggerations of
the breach of faith and friendship of his Scottish crony. This turn of Wakefield's
passions was encouraged by the bailiff (who had his own reasons for being
offended against poor Robin, as having been the unwitting cause of his falling
into disgrace with his master), as well as by the innkeeper, and two or three
chance guests, who stimulated the drover in his resentment against his quon-
dam associate—some from the ancient grudge against the Scots, which, when
it exists anywhere, is to be found lurking in the Border counties, and some from
the general love of mischief which characterises mankind in all ranks of life,
to the honour of Adam's children be it spoken. Good John Barleycorn,³ also,
who always heightens and exaggerates the prevailing passions, be they angry
or kindly, was not wanting in his offices on this occasion; and confusion to false
friends and hard masters was pledged in more than one tankard.

In the meanwhile Mr. Ireby found some amusement in detaining the north-
ern drover at his ancient hall. He caused a cold round of beef to be placed
before the Scot in the butler's pantry, together with a foaming tankard of home-
brewed, and took pleasure in seeing the hearty appetite with which these
unwonted edibles were discussed by Robin Oig M'Combich. The squire himself,
lighting his pipe, compounded between his patrician dignity and his love of agricultural gossip by walking up and down while he conversed with his guest.

“I passed another drove,” said the squire, “with one of your countrymen behind them—they were something less beasts than your drove, doddies most of them—a big man was with them—none of your kilts though, but a decent pair of breeches—D’ye know who he may be?”

“Hout aye—that might, could, and would be Hughie Morrison—I didna think he could hae peen sae weel up. He has made a day on us; but his Argyleshires will have wearied shanks. How far was he pehind?“

“I think about six or seven miles,” answered the squire, “for I passed them at the Christenbury Crag, and I overtook you at the Hollan Bush. If his beasts be leg-weary, he will be maybe selling bargains.”

“Na, na, Hughie Morrison is no the man for pargains—ye maun come to some Highland body like Robin Oig hersell for the like of these—put I maun pe wishing you goot night, and twenty of them let alane ane, and I maun down to the clachan to see if the lad Harry Waakfelt is out of his humdudgeons yet.”

The party at the alehouse were still in full talk, and the treachery of Robin Oig still the theme of conversation, when the supposed culprit entered the apartment. His arrival, as usually happens in such a case, put an instant stop to the discussion of which he had furnished the subject, and he was received by the company assembled with that chilling silence which, more than a thousand exclamations, tells an intruder that he is unwelcome. Surprised and offended, but not appalled by the reception which he experienced, Robin entered with an undaunted and even a haughty air, attempted no greeting, as he saw he was received with none, and placed himself by the side of the fire, a little apart from a table, at which Harry Wakefield, the bailiff, and two or three other persons, were seated. The ample Cumbrian kitchen would have afforded plenty of room, even for a larger separation.

Robin, thus seated, proceeded to light his pipe, and call for a pint of twopenny.

“We have no twopence ale,” answered Ralph Heskett, the landlord; “but as thou find’st thy own tobacco, it’s like thou mayst find thy own liquor too—it’s the wont of thy country, I wot.”

“Shame, goodman,” said the landlady, a blithe bustling housewife, hastening herself to supply the guest with liquor—“Thou knowest well enow what the strange man wants, and it’s thy trade to be civil, man. Thou shouldst know that if the Scot likes a small pot he pays a sure penny.”

Without taking any notice of this nuptial dialogue, the Highlander took the flagon in his hand, and, addressing the company generally, drank the interesting toast of “Good markets” to the party assembled.

“The better that the wind blew fewer dealers from the north,” said one of the farmers, “and fewer Highland runts to eat up the English meadows.”

“Saul of my pody, put you are wrang there, my friend,” answered Robin, with composure; “it is your fat Englishmen that eat up our Scots cattle, puir things.”

“I wish there was a summat to eat up their drovers,” said another; “a plain Englishman canna make bread within a kenning of them.”

“Or an honest servant keep his master’s favour, but they will come sliding in between him and the sunshine,” said the bailiff.

4. Sulks.
5. Cows or oxen.
6. Within sight.
“If these pe jokes,” said Robin Oig, with the same composure, “there is ower mony7 jokes upon one man.”

“It is no joke, but downright earnest,” said the bailiff. “Harkye, Mr. Robin Ogg, or whatever is your name, it’s right we should tell you that we are all of one opinion, and that is, that you, Mr. Robin Ogg, have behaved to our friend Mr. Harry Wakefield here like a raff8 and a blackguard.”

“Nae doubt, nae doubt,” answered Robin, with great composure; “and you are a set of very pretty judges, for whose prains or behaviour I wad not gie a pinch of sneeshing.9 If Mr. Harry Waakfelt kens where he is wranged, he kens where he may be righted.”

“He speaks truth,” said Wakefield, who had listened to what passed, divided between the offence which he had taken at Robin’s late behaviour and the revival of his habitual feelings of regard.

He now rose and went towards Robin, who got up from his seat as he approached and held out his hand.

“That’s right, Harry—go it—serve him out,” resounded on all sides—“tip him the nailer—show him the mill.”1

“Hold your peace all of you, and be——,” said Wakefield; and then, addressing his comrade, he took him by the extended hand, with something alike of respect and defiance. “Robin,” he said, “thou hast used me ill enough this day; but if you mean, like a frank fellow, to shake hands, and take a tussle for love on the sod, why, I’ll forgie thee, man, and we shall be better friends than ever.”

“And would it not pe petter to pe cood friends without more of the matter?” said Robin. “We will be much petter friendships with our panes2 hale than proken.”

Harry Wakefield dropped the hand of his friend, or rather threw it from him. “I did not think I had been keeping company for three years with a coward.”

“Coward pelongs to none of my name,” said Robin, whose eyes began to kindle, but keeping the command of his temper. “It was no coward’s legs or hands, Harry Waakfelt, that drew you out of the fords of Frew, when you was drifting ower the plack rock, and every eel in the river expected his share of you.”

“And that is true enough, too,” said the Englishman, struck by the appeal. “Adzooks!” exclaimed the bailiff. “Sure Harry Wakefield, the nattiest lad at Whitson Tryste, Wooler Fair, Carlisle Sands, or Stagshaw Bank, is not going to show white feather? Ah, this comes of living so long with kilts and bonnets—men forget the use of their daddles.”3

“I may teach you, Master Fleecebumpkin, that I have not lost the use of mine,” said Wakefield, and then went on. “This will never do, Robin. We must have a turn-up, or we shall be the talk of the country side. I’ll be d—d if I hurt thee—I’ll put on the gloves, gin4 thou like. Come, stand forward like a man.”

“To be peaten like a dog,” said Robin. “Is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I’ll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language.”

A general cry of “No, no—no law, no lawyer! a bellyful and be friends,” was echoed by the bystanders.

“But,” continued Robin, “if I am to fight, I have no skill to fight like a jack-anapes, with hands and nails.”

“How would you fight, then?” said his antagonist; “though I am thinking it would be hard to bring you to the scratch anyhow.”

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7. Too many.
8. Worthless fellow.
1. Show him your skill—show him a bout of boxing.
2. The Highlander’s pronunciation of “banes,” i.e., bones.
3. Fists.
4. If.
“I would fight with broadswords, and sink point on the first plood drawn—like a gentlemans.”

A loud shout of laughter followed the proposal, which indeed had rather escaped from poor Robin’s swelling heart than been the dictate of his sober judgment.

“Gentleman, quotha!” was echoed on all sides, with a shout of unextinguishable laughter; “a very pretty gentleman, God wot—Canst get two swords for the gentlemen to fight with, Ralph Heskett?”

“No, but I can send to the armoury at Carlisle, and lend them two forks to be making shift with in the meantime.”

“Tush, man,” said another, “the bonny Scots come into the world with the blue bonnet on their heads, and dirk and pistol at their belt.”

“Best send post,” said Mr. Fleecebumpkin, “to the Squire of Corby Castle, to come and stand second to the gentleman.”

In the midst of this torrent of general ridicule, the Highlander instinctively gripped beneath the folds of his plaid.

“But it’s better not,” he said in his own language. “A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility!”

“Make room, the pack of you,” he said, advancing to the door.

But his former friend interposed his sturdy bulk, and opposed his leaving the house; and when Robin Oig attempted to make his way by force, he hit him down on the floor, with as much ease as a boy bowls down a nine-pin.

“A ring, a ring!” was now shouted, until the dark rafters, and the hams that hung on them, trembled again, and the very platters on the bink\(^5\) clattered against each other. “Well done, Harry”—“Give it him home, Harry”—“Take care of him now—he sees his own blood!”

Such were the exclamations, while the Highlander, starting from the ground, all his coldness and caution lost in frantic rage, sprang at his antagonist with the fury, the activity, and the vindictive purpose of an incensed tiger-cat. But when could rage encounter science and temper? Robin Oig again went down in the unequal contest; and as the blow was necessarily a severe one, he lay motionless on the floor of the kitchen. The landlady ran to offer some aid, but Mr. Fleecebumpkin would not permit her to approach.

“Let him alone,” he said; “he will come to within time, and come up to the scratch again. He has not got half his broth yet.”

“He has got all I mean to give him, though,” said his antagonist, whose heart began to relent towards his old associate; “and I would rather by half give the rest to yourself, Mr. Fleecebumpkin, for you pretend to know a thing or two, and Robin had not art enough even to peel\(^6\) before setting to, but fought with his plaid dangling about him.—Stand up, Robin, my man! all friends now; and let me hear the man that will speak a word against you, or your country, for your sake.”

Robin Oig was still under the dominion of his passion, and eager to renew the onset; but being withheld on the one side by the peace-making Dame Heskett, and on the other aware that Wakefield no longer meant to renew the combat, his fury sank into gloomy sullenness.

“Come, come, never grudge so much at it, man,” said the brave-spirited Englishman, with the placability of his country; “shake hands, and we will be better friends than ever.”

“Friends!” exclaimed Robin Oig with strong emphasis—“friends!—Never. Look to yourself, Harry Waakfelt.”

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“Then the curse of Cromwell on your proud Scots stomach, as the man says in the play, and you may do your worst, and be d—d; for one man can say nothing more to another after a tussle than that he is sorry for it.”

On these terms the friends parted. Robin Oig drew out, in silence, a piece of money, threw it on the table, and then left the alehouse. But turning at the door, he shook his hand at Wakefield, pointing with his forefinger upwards, in a manner which might imply either a threat or a caution. He then disappeared in the moonlight.

Some words passed after his departure between the bailiff, who piqued himself on being a little of a bully, and Harry Wakefield, who, with generous inconsistency, was now not indisposed to begin a new combat in defence of Robin Oig’s reputation, “although he could not use his daddles like an Englishman, as it did not come natural to him.” But Dame Heskett prevented this second quarrel from coming to a head by her peremptory interference. “There should be no more fighting in her house,” she said; “there had been too much already.—And you, Mr. Wakefield, may live to learn,” she added, “what it is to make a deadly enemy out of a good friend.”

“Pshaw, dame! Robin Oig is an honest fellow, and will never keep malice.”

“Do not trust to that—you do not know the dour temper of the Scots, though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot.”

“And so is well seen on her daughter,” said Ralph Heskett.

This nuptial sarcasm gave the discourse another turn; fresh customers entered the tap-room or kitchen, and others left it. The conversation turned on the expected markets, and the report of prices from different parts both of Scotland and England—treaties were commenced, and Harry Wakefield was lucky enough to find a chap for a part of his drive, and at a very considerable profit; an event of consequence more than sufficient to blot out all remembrances of the unpleasant scuffle in the earlier part of the day. But there remained one party from whose mind that recollection could not have been wiped away by the possession of every head of cattle betwixt Esk and Eden.7

This was Robin Oig M’Combich.—“That I should have had no weapon,” he said, “and for the first time in my life!—Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk—the dirk—ha! the English blood!—My Muhme’s word—when did her word fall to the ground?”

The recollection of the fatal prophecy confirmed the deadly intention which instantly sprang up in his mind.

“Ha! Morrison cannot be many miles behind; and if it were a hundred, what then?”

His impetuous spirit had now a fixed purpose and motive of action, and he turned the light foot of his country towards the wilds, through which he knew, by Mr. Ireby’s report, that Morrison was advancing. His mind was wholly engrossed by the sense of injury—injury sustained from a friend; and by the desire of vengeance on one whom he now accounted his most bitter enemy. The treasured ideas of self-importance and self-opinion, of ideal birth and quality, had become more precious to him (like the hoard to the miser), because he could only enjoy them in secret. But that hoard was pillaged, the idols which he had secretly worshipped had been desecrated and profaned.

7. There are several rivers named Esk and Eden in Scotland. Most likely Scott is referring to the Esk near Edinburgh and the Eden just above Carlisle, some seventy-five miles to the south.
Insulted, abused, and beaten, he was no longer worthy, in his own opinion, of the name he bore, or the lineage which he belonged to—nothing was left to him—nothing but revenge; and, as the reflection added a galling spur to every step, he determined it should be as sudden and signal as the offence.

When Robin Oig left the door of the alehouse, seven or eight English miles at least lay betwixt Morrison and him. The advance of the former was slow, limited by the sluggish pace of his cattle; the last left behind him stubble-field and hedge-row, crag and dark heath, all glittering with frost-rime in the broad November moonlight, at the rate of six miles an hour. And now the distant lowing of Morrison’s cattle is heard; and now they are seen creeping like moles in size and slowness of motion on the broad face of the moor; and now he meets them—passes them, and stops their conductor.

“May good betide us,” said the Southlander— “Is this you, Robin M’Combich, or your wraith?”

“It is Robin Oig M’Combich,” answered the Highlander, “and it is not.—But never mind that, put pe giving me the skene-dhu.”

“What! you are for back to the Highlands—The devil!—Have you selt all off before the fair? This beats all for quick markets!”

“I have not sold—I am not going north—May pe I will never go north again.—Give me pack my dirk, Hugh Morrison, or there will pe words petween us.”

“Indeed, Robin, I’ll be better advised before I gie it back to you—it is a wanchancy⁸ weapon in a Highlandman’s hand, and I am thinking you will be about some barns-breaking.”

“Prutt, trutt! let me have my weapon,” said Robin Oig impatiently.

“Hooly and fairly,”⁹ said his well-meaning friend. “I’ll tell you what will do better than these dirking doings—Ye ken Highlander, and Lowlander, and Border-men are a’ ae man’s bairns when you are over the Scots dyke.¹ See, the Eskdale callants, and fighting Charlie of Liddesdale, and the Lockerbie lads, and the four Dandies of Lustruther, and a wheen mair² grey plaids, are coming up behind; and if you are wranged, there is the hand of a Manly Morrison, we’ll see you righted, if Carlisle and Stanwix baith took up the feud.”

“To tell you the truth,” said Robin Oig, desirous of eluding the suspicions of his friend, “I have enlisted with a party of the Black Watch,³ and must march off to-morrow morning.”

“Enlisted! Were you mad or drunk?—You must buy yourself off—I can lend you twenty notes, and twenty to that, if the drove sell.”

“I thank you—thank ye, Hughie; but I go with good will the gate that I am going—so the dirk—the dirk!”

“There it is for you, then, since less wunna serve. But think on what I was saying.—Waes me, it will be sair news in the braes of Balquhidder,⁵ that Robin Oig M’Combich should have run an ill gate, and ta’en on.”

“Ill news in Balquhidder, indeed!” echoed poor Robin: “but Cot speed you, Hughie, and send you good marcats. Ye winna meet with Robin Oig again, either at tryste or fair.”

So saying, he shook hastily the hand of his acquaintance, and set out in the direction from which he had advanced, with the spirit of his former pace.

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8. Unlucky.
9. Slowly and carefully.
1. Boundary wall. “The Scots dyke” was an earthwork built in the 16th century along part of the Scottish-English border. “A’ae”: all one.
2. Quite a few more. “Callants”: young fellows.
3. A Highland regiment enrolled in the regular British army in 1739.
5. The traditional Rob Roy MacGregor country, northeast of Loch Lomond. “Wunna”: will not.
“There is something wrang with the lad,” muttered the Morrison to himself; “but we will maybe see better into it the morn’s morning.” 6

But long ere the morning dawned the catastrophe of our tale had taken place. It was two hours after the affray had happened, and it was totally forgotten by almost every one, when Robin Oig returned to Heskett’s inn. The place was filled at once by various sorts of men, and with noises corresponding to their character. There were the grave low sounds of men engaged in busy traffic, with the laugh, the song, and the riotous jest of those who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. Among the last was Harry Wakefield, who, amidst a grinning group of smockfrocks, hobnailed shoes, and jolly English physiognomies, was trolling forth the old ditty,

What though my name be Roger,  
Who drives the plough and cart— 7

when he was interrupted by a well-known voice saying in a high and stern voice, marked by the sharp Highland accent, “Harry Waakfelt—if you be a man stand up!”

“What is the matter? What is it?” the guests demanded of each other.

“It is only a d—d Scotsman,” said Fleecebumpkin, who was by this time very drunk, “whom Harry Wakefield helped to his broth to-day, who is now come to have his cauld kail het again.” 8

“Harry Waakfelt,” repeated the same ominous summons, “stand up, if you be a man!”

There is something in the tone of deep and concentrated passion which attracts attention and imposes awe, even by the very sound. The guests shrank back on every side, and gazed at the Highlander as he stood in the middle of them, his brows bent and his features rigid with resolution.

“I will stand up with all my heart, Robin, my boy, but it shall be to shake hands with you, and drink down all unkindness. It is not the fault of your heart, man, that you don’t know how to clench your hands.”

By this time he stood opposite to his antagonist; his open and unsuspecting look strangely contrasted with the stern purpose which gleamed wild, dark, and vindictive in the eyes of the Highlander.

“ ’Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl.”

“I can fight,” answered Robin Oig sternly, but calmly, “and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me to-day how the Saxon churls fight—I show you now how the Highländ dunniewassel9 fights.”

He seconded the word with the action, and plunged the dagger, which he suddenly displayed, into the broad breast of the English yeoman, with such fatal certainty and force that the hilt made a hollow sound against the breast-bone, and the double-edged point split the very heart of his victim. Harry Wakefield fell and expired with a single groan. His assassin next seized the bailiff by the collar, and offered the bloody poniard to his throat, whilst dread and surprise rendered the man incapable of defence.

“It were very just to lay you beside him,” he said, “but the blood of a base pickthank1 shall never mix on my father’s dirk with that of a brave man.”

6. Tomorrow morning.
8. A proverbial phrase: cold broth hot again (i.e., reheated).
9. A clansman of rank below the chief (from the Gaelic).
1. Flatterer, sycophant.
As he spoke, he cast the man from him with so much force that he fell on the floor, while Robin, with his other hand, threw the fatal weapon into the blazing turf-fire.

“Take me who likes—and let fire cleanse blood if it can.”

The pause of astonishment still continuing, Robin Oig asked for a peace-officer, and, a constable having stepped out, he surrendered himself to his custody.

“A bloody night’s work you have made of it,” said the constable.

“Your own fault,” said the Highlander. “Had you kept his hands off me twa hours since, he would have been now as well and merry as he was twa minutes since.”

“It must be sorely answered,” said the peace-officer.

“Never you mind that—death pays all debts; it will pay that too.”

The horror of the bystanders began now to give way to indignation; and the sight of a favourite companion murdered in the midst of them, the provocation being, in their opinion, so utterly inadequate to the excess of vengeance, might have induced them to kill the perpetrator of the deed even upon the very spot. The constable, however, did his duty on this occasion, and, with the assistance of some of the more reasonable persons present, procured horses to guard the prisoner to Carlisle, to abide his doom at the next assizes. While the escort was preparing, the prisoner neither expressed the least interest nor attempted the slightest reply. Only, before he was carried from the fatal apartment, he desired to look at the dead body, which, raised from the floor, had been deposited upon the large table (at the head of which Harry Wakefield had presided but a few minutes before, full of life, vigour, and animation), until the surgeons should examine the mortal wound. The face of the corpse was decently covered with a napkin. To the surprise and horror of the bystanders, which displayed itself in a general *Ah!* drawn through clenched teeth and half-shut lips, Robin Oig removed the cloth, and gazed with a mournful but steady eye on the lifeless visage, which had been so lately animated that the smile of good-humoured confidence in his own strength, of conciliation at once, and contempt towards his enemy, still curled his lip. While those present expected that the wound, which had so lately flooded the apartment with gore, would send forth fresh streams at the touch of the homicide, Robin Oig replaced the covering, with the brief exclamation, “He was a pretty man!”

My story is nearly ended. The unfortunate Highlander stood his trial at Carlisle. I was myself present, and as a young Scottish lawyer, or barrister at least, and reputed a man of some quality, the politeness of the Sheriff of Cumberland offered me a place on the bench. The facts of the case were proved in the manner I have related them; and whatever might be at first the prejudice of the audience against a crime so un-English as that of assassination from revenge, yet when the rooted national prejudices of the prisoner had been explained, which made him consider himself as stained with indelible dishonour, when subjected to personal violence; when his previous patience, moderation, and endurance were considered, the generosity of the English audience was inclined to regard his crime as the wayward aberration of a false idea of honour rather than as flowing from a heart naturally savage, or perverted by habitual vice. I shall never forget the charge of the venerable judge to the jury, although not at that time liable to be much affected either by that which was eloquent or pathetic.

“We have had,” he said, “in the previous part of our duty” (alluding to some former trials) “to discuss crimes which infer disgust and abhorrence, while they
call down the well-merited vengeance of the law. It is now our still more melancholy task to apply its salutary though severe enactments to a case of a very singular character, in which the crime (for a crime it is, and a deep one) arose less out of the malevolence of the heart than the error of the understanding—less from any idea of committing wrong than from an unhappily perverted notion of that which is right. Here we have two men, highly esteemed, it has been stated, in their rank of life, and attached, it seems, to each other as friends, one of whose lives has been already sacrificed to a punctilio, and the other is about to prove the vengeance of the offended laws; and yet both may claim our commiseration at least, as men acting in ignorance of each other’s national prejudices, and unhappily misguided rather than voluntarily erring from the path of right conduct.

“In the original cause of the misunderstanding we must in justice give the right to the prisoner at the bar. He had acquired possession of the enclosure, which was the object of competition, by a legal contract with the proprietor, Mr. Ireby; and yet, when accosted with reproaches undeserved in themselves, and galling doubtless to a temper at least sufficiently susceptible of passion, he offered notwithstanding to yield up half his acquisition, for the sake of peace and good neighbourhood, and his amicable proposal was rejected with scorn. Then follows the scene at Mr. Heskett the publican’s, and you will observe how the stranger was treated by the deceased, and, I am sorry to observe, by those around, who seem to have urged him in a manner which was aggravating in the highest degree. While he asked for peace and for composition, and offered submission to a magistrate, or to a mutual arbiter, the prisoner was insulted by a whole company, who seem on this occasion to have forgotten the national maxim of ‘fair play’; and while attempting to escape from the place in peace, he was intercepted, struck down, and beaten to the effusion of his blood.

“Gentlemen of the Jury, it was with some impatience that I heard my learned brother, who opened the case for the crown, give an unfavourable turn to the prisoner’s conduct on this occasion. He said the prisoner was afraid to encounter his antagonist in fair fight, or to submit to the laws of the ring; and that therefore, like a cowardly Italian, he had recourse to his fatal stiletto, to murder the man whom he dared not meet in manly encounter. I observed the prisoner shrink from this part of the accusation with the abhorrence natural to a brave man; and as I would wish to make my words impressive, when I point his real crime, I must secure his opinion of my impartiality, by rebutting everything that seems to me a false accusation. There can be no doubt that the prisoner is a man of resolution—too much resolution—I wish to Heaven that he had less, or rather that he had had a better education to regulate it.

“Gentlemen, as to the laws my brother talks of, they may be known in the bull-ring, or the bear-garden, or the cockpit, but they are not known here. Or, if they should be so far admitted as furnishing a species of proof that no malice was intended in this sort of combat, from which fatal accidents do sometimes arise, it can only be so admitted when both parties are in pari casu, equally acquainted with, and equally willing to refer themselves to, that species of arbitrament. But will it be contended that a man of superior rank and education is to be subjected, or is obliged to subject himself, to this coarse and brutal strife, perhaps in opposition to a younger, stronger, or more skilful opponent? Certainly even the pugilistic code, if founded upon the fair play of

2. A fine point of etiquette. 3. In the same circumstances (Latin).
Merry Old England, as my brother alleges it to be, can contain nothing so preposterous. And, gentlemen of the jury, if the laws would support an English gentleman, wearing, we will suppose, his sword, in defending himself by force against a violent personal aggression of the nature offered to this prisoner, they will not less protect a foreigner and a stranger, involved in the same unpleasing circumstances. If, therefore, gentlemen of the jury, when thus pressed by a vis major, the object of obloquy to a whole company, and of direct violence from one at least, and, as he might reasonably apprehend, from more, the panel had produced the weapon which his countrymen, as we are informed, generally carry about their persons, and the same unhappy circumstance had ensued which you have heard detailed in evidence, I could not in my conscience have asked from you a verdict of murder. The prisoner’s personal defence might indeed, even in that case, have gone more or less beyond the moderamen inculpatae tutelae, spoken of by lawyers, but the punishment incurred would have been that of manslaughter, not of murder. I beg leave to add that I should have thought this milder species of charge was demanded in the case supposed, notwithstanding the statute of James I. cap. 8, which takes the case of slaughter by stabbing with a short weapon, even without malice prepense, out of the benefit of clergy. For this statute of stabbing, as it is termed, arose out of a temporary cause; and as the real guilt is the same, whether the slaughter be committed by the dagger or by sword or pistol, the benignity of the modern law places them all on the same, or nearly the same, footing.

“But, gentlemen of the jury, the pinch of the case lies in the interval of two hours interposed betwixt the reception of the injury and the fatal retaliation. In the heat of affray and chaude mêlée, law, compassionating the infirmities of humanity, makes allowance for the passions which rule such a stormy moment—for the sense of present pain, for the apprehension of further injury, for the difficulty of ascertaining with due accuracy the precise degree of violence which is necessary to protect the person of the individual, without annoying or injuring the assailant more than is absolutely necessary. But the time necessary to walk twelve miles, however speedily performed, was an interval sufficient for the prisoner to have recollected himself; and the violence with which he carried his purpose into effect, with so many circumstances of deliberate determination, could neither be induced by the passion of anger, nor that of fear. It was the purpose and the act of predetermined revenge, for which law neither can, will, nor ought to have sympathy or allowance.

“It is true, we may repeat to ourselves, in alleviation of this poor man’s unhappy action, that his case is a very peculiar one. The country which he inhabits was, in the days of many now alive, inaccessible to the laws, not only of England, which have not even yet penetrated thither, but to those to which our neighbours of Scotland are subjected, and which must be supposed to be, and no doubt actually are, founded upon the general principles of justice and equity which pervade every civilised country. Amongst their mountains, as among the North American Indians, the various tribes were wont to make war upon each other, so that each man was obliged to go armed for his own protection. These men, from the ideas which they entertained of their own descent and of their own consequence, regarded themselves as so many cavaliers or men-at-arms, rather than as the peasantry of a peaceful country. Those

4. Greater force (Latin).
5. Mitigating circumstance of guiltless protection (i.e., justifiable self-defense; Latin).
6. Heated conflict (French).
laws of the ring, as my brother terms them, were unknown to the race of warlike mountaineers; that decision of quarrels by no other weapons than those which nature has given every man must to them have seemed as vulgar and as preposterous as to the noblesse of France. Revenge, on the other hand, must have been as familiar to their habits of society as to those of the Cherokees or Mohawks. It is indeed, as described by Bacon, at bottom a kind of wild untutored justice; for the fear of retaliation must withhold the hands of the oppressor where there is no regular law to check daring violence. But though all this may be granted, and though we may allow that, such having been the case of the Highlands in the days of the prisoner’s fathers, many of the opinions and sentiments must still continue to influence the present generation, it cannot, and ought not, even in this most painful case, to alter the administration of the law, either in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, or in mine. The first object of civilisation is to place the general protection of the law, equally administered, in the room of that wild justice which every man cut and carved for himself according to the length of his sword and the strength of his arm. The law says to the subjects, with a voice only inferior to that of the Deity, ‘Vengeance is mine.’ The instant that there is time for passion to cool and reason to interpose, an injured party must become aware that the law assumes the exclusive cognisance of the right and wrong betwixt the parties, and opposes her inviolable buckler to every attempt of the private party to right himself. I repeat that this unhappy man ought personally to be the object rather of our pity than our abhorrence, for he failed in his ignorance, and from mistaken notions of honour. But his crime is not the less that of murder, gentlemen, and, in your high and important office, it is your duty so to find. Englishmen have their angry passions as well as Scots; and should this man’s action remain unpunished, you may unsheath, under various pretences, a thousand daggers betwixt the Land’s-end and the Orkneys.”

The venerable judge thus ended what, to judge by his apparent emotion, and by the tears which filled his eyes, was really a painful task. The jury, according to his instructions, brought in a verdict of guilty; and Robin Oig M’Combich, alias M’Gregor, was sentenced to death, and left for execution, which took place accordingly. He met his fate with great firmness, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. “I give a life for the life I took,” he said, “and what can I do more?”

1827

The Dreary Change

The sun upon the Weirdlaw Hill,
In Ettrick’s vale, is sinking sweet;
The westland wind is hush and still,
The lake lies sleeping at my feet.

Yet not the landscape to mine eye

7. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) in his Essays described revenge as “a kind of wild justice, which the more man’s nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out.”
8. The southern extreme of England and the northern extreme of Scotland.
Bears those bright hues that once it bore; Though evening, with her richest dye, Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

With listless look along the plain, I see Tweed's silver current glide, 10 And coldly mark the holy fane Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.
The quiet lake, the balmy air, The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree—
Are they still such as once they were? Or is the dreary change in me?

Alas, the warped and broken board, How can it bear the painter's dye! 20 The harp of strained and tuneless chord, How to the minstrel's skill reply!
To aching eyes each landscape lowers, To feverish pulse each gale blows chill; And Araby's or Eden's bowers Were barren as this moorland hill.

Lucy Ashton’s Song

Look not thou on beauty's charming, Sit thou still when kings are arming, Taste not when the wine-cup glistens, Speak not when the people listens, 5 Stop thine ear against the singer, From the red gold keep thy finger; Vacant heart and hand and eye, Easy live and quiet die.

1. Lucy Ashton is the tragic, passive heroine of The Bride of Lammermoor.