THE

LIFE AND EXPLOITS

OF

ROB ROY M'GREGOR.

FALKIRK:

PRINTED BY T. JOHNSTON.

1824.

THE

LIFE

OF

Rob Roy M'Gregor,

&c.

ROBERT M'GREGOR, or ROB ROY, was second son of Donald M'Gregor, of the family of Glengyle, a lieutenant-colonel in the king's service, by a daughter of Campbell of Glenlyon. Our hero was denominated *Roy*, a Celtic or Gaelic phrase, significant of his ruddy complexion and colour of hair.

Rob Roy's family were very respectable. His father was the friend and ally of Regent Murray, and brought to his assistance 300 M'Gregors, in an expedition to quell an insurrection of the M'Phersons in the north; for which service Murray granted him a lease of a farm, which still remains in the possession of the family.

The education which Rob Roy re-

ceived was sufficient for the sphere of life he was destined to occupy In his early years, it would have required very uncommon penetratien to discover those indications of sagacity and prudence which he afterwards exhibited. In youth he evinced strong natural parts, and soon excelled his compeers in the rude accomplishments of the age. He was active, bold, and possessed of great bodily powers; he has been known to seize a deer by the horns, and hold him fast. In the use of the broad sword, few could equal him. But although his frame was so singularly robust and his disposition daring and resolute, yet his manners were polite, his address insinuating, his faculties acute, his conclusions prompt, and his resolution determined.

In his youth, he studied the ancient history, and recited the impressive poetry, of his country; and these were eminently calculated to inspire sentiments that cherished a warlike and enterprising spirit. Rob, in his boyhood, delighted in the reveries of a romantic imagination, contemplating the sublime grandeur of his native wilds—"The rocky mountain, whose summits were often hid in the clouds that floated around them; the dark valley, encircled

by woody eminences; the bold promontory, opposed to the foaming ocean, and sometimes adorned by the castle of a chieftain; the still bosom of the lake, that reflected the surrounding landscape; the impetuous mountain cataract; and the dreary silence of the cavern," were objects that influenced his youthful feelings, disposing his mind to the cultivation of generous and manly sentiments. These impressions were never after eradicated. They continued to biass his temper, and to give it a cast of romantic chivalry, which he exemplified in many of his future actions."

Rob Roy being now determined to follow the quiet avocations of a rural life, rented a tract of grazing land at Balquhidder, and for several years, pursued a quiet and inoffensive course. But his cattle were often stolen, along with those of his neighbours, by hordes of banditti from the northern shires, who wasted the country. In order to protect himself from these maraiders, he was constrained to maintain a select party of men; and to this cause may partly be attributed the warlike habits which he afterwards acquired.

A considerable number of Macras, from the western part of Ross, having

committed an outrage on the property of a neighbour, and carried off fifteen head of cattle, an express was sent to Rob, informing him of the circumstance. Being the first call of the kind he had received since he became the protector of the vicinity, he instantly summoned a dozen of his men, and followed the plunderers. Two days and a night he travelled, without obtaining any other information as to their track, then at times seeing the impression of the cattle's feet on the ground. The second night, being fatigued, the party lay down in a glen, near the march of Badenoch. They had not rested long, when a fire was discovered at a little distance. They instantly set forward to reconnoitre, when they found it was a band of jolly tinkers, carousing near their tent. Their mirth, however, was soon interrupted, when they beheld Rob Roy and his party. The tinkers informed him they had seen the Macras, who were at but a little distance; and two of the tinkers agreed to conduct the party to the spot.

The freebooters had halted, for the security of their spoil, in a narrow part of the glen, when the M'Gregors overtook them, as they were setting out in the morning. Rob, with a loud and ter-

rific voice, which resounded among the craggy acclivities, charged them to stop; but as they disregarded the order, he rushed upon them with such fury, that six of their number lay prostrate on the ground. The rest made a stout resistance, but were soon overcome; two being killed, and five wounded, they gave up the contest. Four of Roy's lads were severely wounded, and himself received a cut on the left arm from the captain of the banditti. The booty, thus recovered, was driven back, and restored to the rightful owner. Rob received great praise for this exploit; and many offered to contribute their donation of 'black mail.' This circumstance, no doubt, tended to arouse the latent activity and courage of his mind.

The executive government not only sanctioned, but enforced the exaction of 'black mail:' and all constables were commanded to see 'this order put into execution, as they sall answer to the contrair.' Rob Roy's exaction of this tax was not therefore an unauthorised robbery, but sanctioned by custom and local institution. For some time too he was employed in assisting the officers of the neighbouring districts, in collecting imposts for maintaining the 'Black Watch,'

a corps of militia, raised to protect the lives and property of the people from marauding plunderers. This corps, from the celebrity they acquired, afterwards became regular troops, and were the origin of the gallant 42d regiment, long known by the name of the 'Highland Watch.

Rob Roy's birth as a gentleman, and his respectable connexions, when he attained to manhood, procured him access to the first families, and admission into the best company in the country. He formed a matrimonial engagement with a daughter of M'Gregor of Comar, a woman of an agreeable temper and domestic habits, active and economical in the management of her family. But she took no part in the predatory concerns of her husband, except on one occasion afterwards mentioned.

Rob was not possessed of any patrimonial property, but became master of the estate of Craigerostan, in the following manner.—' When M'Gregor of M'Gregor, was driven from his possessions in Glenurchy, by the Campbells, he bought the Lands of Inversnait and Craigerostan, then of small value, tho' of considerable boundaries, extending from the head of Loch Lomond, 12

miles along its eastern border, and stretching far into the interior of the country, and partly around the base of stupendous Ben Lomond. On the death of his chief, in 1698, he left his property to a natural brother, who was laird of Kilmannan. This person was succeeded by a son, who courted a daughter of the laird of Leny; but Roy Roy, from what cause is not known, raised suspicions against him in the mind of the young lady, who in consequence rejected her lover. He then paid his addresses to a daughter of Colquhoun of Luss, and their marriage day was was fixed, when Rob again interfered, and Miss Colquhoun also refused to fulfil her engagement. Enraged at such treatment, the young chieftain went to Falkirk, where he married a woman of mean extraction, which so displeased his friends, that they no longer regarded him as their connection. By this treatment, the young man was so disgusted with his clan, that he gave up his estate to Rob Roy, and leaving his country, was never more heard of.

Rob Roy devoted himself to the avocation of a grazier; and as Highland cattle about this time began to be in great request in England, Rob made

frequent journies for carrying on this trafic. When M'Gregor was fairly settled, and tacitly confirmed, as laird of Craigerostan, his friendship became valuable, and was solicited by his wealthy neighbours. At this time the political variance between the families of Montrose and Argyle had grown into personal enmity; this induced each of them to court the favour of Rob Roy, whose personal prowess, and daring spirit, rendered him a desirable auxiliary, or a formidable enemy.

Montrose, to gain the confidence, and secure the friendship of M'Gregor, made a proposal to enter into copartnery with him in the trade of cattle-dealing, a plan in which he readily acquiesced. Montrose accordingly advanced Rob 1000 merks (about 50l. Sterling) who was also expected to lay out a similar sum, and the profits were to be divided. Argyle also laboured to form an alliance with Rob, hoping that, from his resolute bravery and local situation, he would be a source of constant annoyance to Montrose. Besides, he might suppose that Rob Roy had evinced a friendly disposition by assuming the name of Campbell, that, of M'Gregor being under proscription. But though Rob had chosen

this name in compliment to his mother, and in compliance with the law, he was acknowledged in the country, and by his clan, under no other name than that of M'Gregor. He therefore spurned the overtures of Argyle with indignation.

Rob Roy, in carrying on business with the Marquis of Montrose, was the active manager. But a M'Donald, an inferior partner, on one occasion was intrusted with a large sum of money, with which he made off. This greatly deranged Rob's affairs, and he was unable either to pay Montrose his money, or to support his own credit. Montrose acted with uncommon severity and harshness: he dissolved the copartnery, and insisted that Rob should transfer his property in security of the claims he preferred. This proposition was firmly rejected; nor could the threats of Montrose's factor alter his purpose. A lawsuit was entered against Rob, and he was ultimately compelled to give up his lands in mortgage to Montrose, under condition that they should again revert to himself when he could pay the debt.

Rob Roy was extremely indignant at the ungenerous conduct of Montrose. However, his mind was too strong to be weakened by misfortune; he redoubled

his exertions, and was soon able to tender the sum for which his estate was held. But Montrose refused to deliver up his property, pretending the amount had greatly increased, and that it would take a considerable time to make out the statement. In this equivocal manner the Marquis's factor endeavoured to evade the lawful claims of an injured man. Just at this time the revolution took place, and many of the chieftains were arraying their followers to be in readiness for acting in favour of the house of Stewart. Argyle attached himself to the Prince of Orange; but not having been restored to his property, since the attainder and judicial murder of his father, he was hesitating in his sentiments; and, aware that Rob, in the event of a war, would be a valuable auxiliary, he renewed his overtures to him, and warmly solicited his assistance.

The suspicious Montrose soon discovered that a correspondence had commenced between M'Gregor and Argyle; and, eager for the destruction of a family that had rivalled him in greatness, he wrote a letter to Rob Roy, in which he promised, that if he would go to Edinburgh, and give such information as would convict Argyle of treasonable

practices, he would both withdraw the mortgage upon his property, and give him a large sum of money. Rob Roy received this infamous proposal with the lofty contempt and proud scorn of a M'Gregor*, and, without deigning to

* A chieftain of the M'Gregors, residing on his freehold in Glenorchy, had a son who had gone in the shooting season, with a party of young associates, to the moors. They met with a young gentleman of the name of Lamont from Cowel, who, attended by a servant, was going to Fort William. They all went to a public house that was in the place, and took a refreshment together: in the course of which a trifling dispute arose between Lamont and young M'Gregor. Dirks were drawn, and, before friends could interfere, M'Gregor fell, mortally wounded. In the confusion Lamont escaped, and got securely to the house of M'Gregor, which happened to be the first habitation that met his eye at the dawn of morning. The chieftain was up, and standing at the door.—'Save my life,' said the stranger, 'for men are in pursuit of me to take it away.'—'Whoever you are,' says M'Gregor, 'here you are safe.'

Lamont was but just brought in, and introduced to the family, when a loud demand was made at the door if a stranger had entered the house. 'He has,' says M'Gregor, 'and what is your business with him?'—'In a scuffle,' cried the pursuers, 'he has killed your son; deliver him up, that we may instantly revenge the deed.' M'Gregor's lady and his two daughters filled the house with their cries and lamentations.—'Be quiet,' says the chief, with the tears streeming from his eyes, 'and let no man presume to touch the youth—for he has M'Gre-

return an answer, forwarded it to Argyle, who soon took occasion to confront Montrose, with a charge of malevolence. But Rob suffered severely for this noble act, for Montrose, in revenge, procured an adjudicatien of his estate, and it was evicted for a sum very inadequate to its value.

During this transaction, Rob Roy was in England on business, and the expulsion of his family was conducted by

gor's word and honour for his safety; and *as God lives* he shall be safe and secure whilst in my house.'

In a little, the chieftain accompanied Lamont, with twelve men, under arms, to Inverary, and landed him in safety on the other side of Lochfine, then took him by the hand, and thus addressed him:—'Lamont, now you are safe:—no longer can I, or will I protect you;—keep out of the way of my clan.—May God forgive and bless you.'

This happened some time before the act of proscription against the clan Gregor in 1633, when, to the discredit of justice, a weak government sacrificed a whole people for the enormities of a few. M'Gregor lost his property, and was hunted for his life, in consequence of this iniquitous act. He took shelter in the house of this very Lamont,—noted for his urbanity, and his deep contrition for the misfortune of his younger years; and who, by every act of kindness to his venerable guest, and some branches of his family, revered the providence which put it in his power to repay to the family of his benefactor, in some measure, the loss he had occasioned them in the death of a son.

Graham of Killearn, under circumstances of the utmost indignity and barbarity. When M'Gregor returned, and beheld his destitute family, his soul was filled with rage, and he determined to take revenge on the authors of his misfortunes. His first act of hostility against Montrose was at a term. when he knew the tenantry of that nobleman were to pay their rents. He and his men called upon them, and obliged them to give him the money, for which, however, he granted them acknowledgements, 'that it was received on account of Montrose.'

In this compulsitory manner he levied the rents from the tenants for several years; and Montrose, conscious, perhaps, that he had taken undue advantage of Rob Roy, seemed to overlook the matter until a subsequent occasion, when the factor was collecting his rents at Chapellaroch in Stirlingshire. Rob Roy had given out some days before by proclamation at the church door, that he had gone to Ireland; and the factor consequently concluded that he would meet with no interruption in his duty. Towards evening, however, Rob Roy placed his men in a wood in the neighbourhood, and went himself, with his

piper playing before him, to the inn of Chapellaroch, where Killearn was, attended by several gentlemen of the vicinity. Alarmed at the sound of the pipes, they started up to discover from whence it proceeded; and Killearn, in great consternation, behold Rob Roy approaching the door.

He had finished his collection, but the bags were hastily thrown for concealment on a shelf. Rob Roy entered with the usual salutation, and the factor, at first had no suspicion of his final purpose, as he laid down his sword, and partook of the entertainment; after which, he desired his piper to strike up a tune. This was a signal to his men, who in a few minutes surrounded the house, and six of them entered the room with drawn swords. Rob Roy, laying hold of his sword, as if about to go away, asked the factor, 'How he had come on with his collection?' 'I have got nothing,' said Killearn, 'I have not yet begun to collect.' 'No, no, chamberlain,' replied Rob, 'your falsehood will not do with me, I must count fairly with you by the book.' Resistance being useless, the book was exhibited, and according to it the money

was given up, for which Rob Roy granted a receipt.

But from the infamous treatment his family had received from Killearn, Rob Roy was resolved to punish him, and had him immediately conveyed to an island near the east end of Loch Ketturin, now rendered famous as the supposed residence of fair *Ellen*, the *Lady of the Lake*.

In this island Killearn was confined for a considerable time; and, when set at liberty, received from Rob a prudent admonition as to his future conduct.

Rob Roy was always the friend and protector of the weak and oppressed. The disorders which prevailed in the nation, during the reign of Charles II. became still more dreadful on the accession of his brother James, whose bigotry permitted the most odious crimes, and authorised such cruelty as the mind shudders to contemplate. At these scenes of horror Rob had often been present, whose soul burned with indignation at their wickedness, regretting that he was not vigorous enough to crush the bands of inhuman wretches who executed the bloody commands of the king. After he had been expelled from his estate he went to Carlisle, to re-

cover a sum of money due to him. Returning by Moffat, he fell in with a party of soldiers hanging four peasants, whom they called fanatics. A young woman, who was also bound to the same tree, bewailed the fate of her father and brother, two of those who suffered. The deadly work being completed, four of the soldiers seized the young woman, tied her hands and feet, and were carrying her towards the river to drown her, regardless of her tears and entreaties to save her. Our hero's heart being wrung with sympathy, and shocked at such cruelty, ordered the perpetrators to stop, and demanded 'why they treated a helpless female with such barbarity?' The officer desired him to 'be gone, otherwise he would experience the same treatment, for daring to interrupt the king's instructions.' The miscreants were just about to toss the girl in the stream over a precipiece. Rob became frantic with rage, sprung upon the soldiers, and in an instant eight of them were struggling in the pool.

The officer and the remaining ten men were confounded and stood motionless. In this pause Rob cut the cords that bound the girl; and killed the officer at one stroke. The soldiers attacked him,

but he killed two of them, and the rest fled to the town, leaving him master of the field, to the unspeakable joy of the young woman, and the great delight of the peasantry who stood around.

Our hero now devoted himself to military pursuits. He selected a body of men no less resolute than himself. These bold M'Gregors entered into a bond of union which no hardship could tear asunder, no contention overcome; while the masterly discipline established by Rob rendered them the terror of surrounding counties. They mutually recited the wrongs of their clan, and renewed the determination of taking a proper revenge. While the warlike music of the pipes animated their spirits, and inspired them with a courage almost irresistible.

The government now watched the motions of the Highland chiefs with a jealous eye, and thus they were obliged to communicate their sentiments respecting the exiled house of Stewart in the most secret and clandestine manner. Their opinions were unanimous, and a bond of faith and mutual support was signed. By the negligence of a chieftain to whom the bond was intrusted, it fell into the hands of Captain William

Campbell of Glenlyon. When it was known that a man of such inhuman feelings held this bond, those who signed it were seriously alarmed, and various plans were suggested for recovering it. Rob Roy, with the clans, had also affixed his name; but on his own account he regarded neither the king nor his government. He was, however, urged by several chiefs to exert himself, and, if possible, to recover the bond. To accomplish this, he went to Fort William in disguise; and getting access to Capt. Campbell, who was his near relation, he discovered that he had put the bond into the possession of the governor, who was determined to forward it to the Privy Council. Rob learned the day on which it was to be sent off, took leave and went home. The dispatch was made up by Governor Hill, and sent from Fort William, escorted by an ensign's company. On the third day's march, Rob and fifty of his men met the party in Glendochart, and demanded their dispatches. The officer refused; but was told by Rob, that he must either give their lives and the dispatches together, or the dispatches alone. The dispatches were given up; and Rob, having taken out the bond he wanted, begged the of-

ficer would excuse the delay he had occasioned, and wished him a good journey. By this bold exploit many chiefs saved their heads, and forfeiture of their estates.

The spirit of clanship, the dignity assumed by great chieftains, and the profound submission of their vassals, often produced the most iniquitous actions. Against such acts of violence, though overlooked by the government, Rob Roy M'Gregor manfully and openly drew his sword.

On the estate of Perth, a clansman of Rob Roy's occupied a farm on lease; but the factor took occasion to break it, and the tenant was ordered to remove. Rob, hearing the story, went to Drummond Castle. On his arrival the first person he met was Blair drummond, the factor, whom he knocked down, without uttering a word, and walked on to the gate. Perth, who saw this from a window, came out and gave him a cordial welcome.—'Perth, I want no shew of hospitality; I insist only to get back the tack of which my namesake has been deprived, otherwise I will let loose my legions on your property.' Perth was obliged to comply. The lease was restored, and Rob sat down and breakfasted with the Earl.

Graham of Killearn was factor on the estate of Montrose, and second cousin to that nobleman. Being in the constant practice of distressing those tenants who were in arrear, he was despised in the country. He had once sequestrated the goods and cattle of a poor widow for arrears of rent; when Rob heard of the cruelty, he went to her, and gave her the 300 merks she owed, at same time desiring her, when she paid it, to get a receipt. On the legal day, the officers appeared at the widow's house to take away her effects. She paid their demand; but Rob met them; made them surrender the money they had extorted; gave them a good drubbing, and an advice never again to act in the same manner.

Sometimes the rich procured a mortgage bond upon the property of his needy neighbour; and this was generally turned into an authority to seize their lands by force. Glengyle was under a bond of this kind, when Rob Roy's nephew succeeded to it. Rob, knowing what advantage would be taken of the contract, gave his nephew the money, for the purpose of retrieving the bond. The period of redemption had only a few months to run; and, under pretence

that the bond could not be found, the money was refused. Rob Roy at this time having been otherwise engaged, the matter lay over, and the bond was allowed to expire; when young M'Gregor was ordered to remove himself, his dependants, and cattle, in eight days. Rob Roy could not suffer such treatment; and, assembling his *gillies*, took the chieftain prisoner, who, knowing Rob's disposition, agreed to give up the bond when he got home. Rob, putting no confidence in his promise, compelled him to send for it, and give it up to him presently.

The incursions of our hero induced Montrose to apply to the Privy Council for protection; and obtained an act which was expressed in terms—'to repress scorners, robbers, and broken men, to raise hue and cry after them, to recover the goods stolen, and to seize their persons.'

This decree, though despised by Rob, made him more watchful of his foes. But Montrose, under authority of the act of council, called out a number of his people, headed by a confidential Graham, and accompanied by some military, sent them to lay hold of Rob Roy; he chanced to be absent when the

Grahams assailed his house during the night. Having learned that Rob and his men were at a public house in Strathfillan, he in the house, and they in an adjoining barn: The Grahams immediately broke open the door. Rob was instantly accoutred to meet them, and levelled them man by man as they approached, until his own lads, roused by the noise, attacked the Grahams in the rear with such determination, that they retreated, leaving behind them several of their party sorely wounded; but Rob, having refreshed his men with a glass of whisky, ascended the hill towards the head of Loch Lomond.

FINIS.