

THE  
**SINGULAR LIFE,**  
 ADVENTURES, AND DEPREDACTIONS  
 OF  
**DAVID HAGGART,**  
**THE MURDERER,**

*related by himself, while under the Sentence of Death.*

WITH AN

**Account of his Execution**

*Edinburgh, July 18, 1821, for the Murder of Mor-  
 rin, one of the Turnkeys of Dumfries Jail, and*

**A COPY OF VERSES,**

*written by Haggart in his Cell the Day after his  
 Condemnation.*



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LIFE OF

**DAVID HAGGART.**

DAVID HAGGART was born at a farm town, called the Golden Acre, near Cannon Mills, Edinburgh on the 24th of June, 1801, his father was a gamekeeper, but afterwards a dog trainer. He was early put to school, where he acquired a good knowledge of English grammar, writing, and arithmetic. About the age of ten, a trifling accident occurred at home, which, for fear of punishment from his father, determined him to leave home, and from that moment he dated the commencement of his sinful career. He had made no wicked acquaintance as yet, but committed several depredations by himself.

The first of these was stealing a bantam cock from a woman at the back of the New Town, Edinburgh. Having taken a fancy to it he offered to buy it, but the woman would not sell it; he fell on the scheme of putting another cock of his own a-fighting, and then came off with his prize. His next was lifting a shoptill from a poor woman in Stock Bridge. Being some miles from town and tired, he mounted a poney which was grazing on the

road side, and rode home, where he kept it for some time in an outhouse, where he had formerly kept a cuddie; he kept it there for several days, until the owner found it out by accident. At Leith Races, in 1818. he enlisted in the Norfolk Militia, and learned the drum and bugle-horn; the regiment was disbanded in about a year afterwards, and he was discharged. His father was then living in the south back of the Cannongate, Edinburgh, and he went home, when he was put as an apprentice to the millwright and engineering business, with Cockburn and Baird, in the Cannongate, where he behaved with honesty, and was very well liked by his employers.

His master having given up business he was of course thrown idle, and at this time got acquainted with many worthless characters, among whom was one Barney, an Irishman, who had been bred a tailor in Dumfries; he was older than Haggart, of great bodily strength, and a most skilful pick-pocket.—Barney put him up to a number of tricks, and they agreed to travel together, in August, 1817, when just on the point of going to England, they past a day at Portobello Races, and picked a gentleman's pocket of eleven pounds, the first ever Haggart attempted in day-light; with this they took outside places on the Jedburgh coach, and

got themselves genteelly dressed. They attended St. James's fair at Kelso, and picked twenty pounds from two persons. From thence they went to Dumfries, and stopped three weeks; they attended Lockerby fair, and going into a public-house, a farmer and drover were casting out, when Barney blew the coal, and they fell a fighting, and both tumbled. Barney picked the farmer's pocket of twenty-three pounds. Haggart called for the waiter, and appeared in a violent passion, paid for a bottle of porter, abused him for putting them into such company, and immediately left the house. They departed next morning, and went to Langholm fair, where they took from a sheep farmer £.100 in ten pound notes, and £.10 in twenty shilling notes. About half an hour after, they saw John Richardson, a Dumfries officer, running about, but he did not notice them. They took a post-chaise, and went to Annan. and next day took the coach for Carlisle.

On other nights they got two gold watches; they took about seventy pounds in whole during their stay in Newcastle. They then went to Durham, and at night broke a lonely house on the road to York; they got twenty pounds here. They were apprehended for this act, tried, and found guilty, and sent back to prison, to be brought up for sentence of death at the end of the as-

sizes.—They broke the prison that night, but Haggart only escaped; he provided himself with a rope-ladder, and gave the saw to Barney, who made his escape that same night. When Haggart was coming to Durham from York with his saw in company with a York pickpocket, they were pursued by two constables; and just as one was apprehending Haggart, he laid him low with his pistol.—They got clear away, and he never knew whether the man was murdered or not, but he thought so. They next went to Coldstream fair, and Barney being found attempting a farmer's pocket, got three months in Jedburgh jail. Haggart went to Newcastle again, and to the same lodgings, where he was treated like a son; little did the people know who they were so kind to. He did numerous tricks here, and then proceeded to Edinburgh, where he carried on the same line, but did not live in his father's house.

In September he started for Perth, with one Henry, and had some adventures. They returned to Leith, and were taken by the police for some crimes; got bail, and were liberated.

Haggart had a number of adventures in Edinburgh and neighbourhood, and was put four months in Bridewell. After being released, he met with some of his companions, and took a trip through the North: he was

in Aberdeen jail for some time, and after committing more depredations, he returned to Edinburgh.

They broke into several houses in Edinburgh and Leith, and on New-year's morning, 1820, Haggart had for his share five silver watches and a gold one, taken on the South and North bridges. He remained in Edinburgh till the 18th, when he was taken up and put into the Lock-up-house to find bail. He got out and one night paid a visit to the Lock-up-house, and gave the keeper so much drink, that he got the key, and liberated six prisoners.

He went to Leith the night following and took lodgings in Cupar Street, and lived with a woman of the town. While here he committed various acts in Leith, Edinburgh, and neighbourhood, by tying some shop-doors, and thrusting his hand through the windows and grasping whatever goods lay in his road, breaking into numerous houses, picking pockets of watches, &c.—In the course of these operations he removed to different lodgings.

On the first of March, while sitting in his lodgings with a pick-pocket of the name of Forrest, in Johnston Street, North Leith, Captain Ross, of the police, and one of his men, came in upon them; Ross seized Forrest and carried him off, leaving Haggart in

charge of the policeman. When left alone, the policeman opened a bed-room door, and was looking into it, when Haggart forced him in, locked the door, and was making his way down the stairs, when he was met by Ross and another policeman; a struggle commenced, but the two overpowered Haggart, and he was carried to the Police-office streaming with blood. He was kept here two days, and then put into the jail to stand trial—On the 27th March he got a small file, and cut the chains off his legs penetrated through two thick walls with his handcuffs, liberated Forrest, and got to the outside about five o'clock next morning. When on the outer stair, he saw a man coming up Queen-street, and he prepared to give him a battle; but the man only said, "Run, Haggart, run, I won't touch ye." Haggart took hold of Forrest's hand, and ran even on to Dalkeith, without stopping. He staid there all night, and stole twelve yards of blue cloth, started at two o'clock next morning for Kelso, robbed a farmer of four pounds, and set off for Dumfries. They were joined by two other pickpockets, one of whom was hanged shortly after at Glasgow.

In Dumfries he picked several pockets, and entered several dwelling-houses, when he fell in with his old friend Barney M'Guire, never having seen him since they parted at Kelso



in 1818. They were intending to leave Dumfries that night, but Barney was taken up. Haggart started for Carlisle next morning, but was overtaken and carried back to Dumfries. Captain Ross arrived in a few days and carried him back to Leith jail.

Barney was transported for fourteen years. Haggart was tried at Edinburgh on the 12th of July, but got off; he was then sent to Dumfries, to stand trial at the circuit there for housebreaking: his trial did not go on, and he was sent back to jail—Here he got acquainted with a lad, John Dunbar, who was under sentence of transportation. He also got acquainted with some people belonging to the town, who seemed willing to do him a favour: so Haggart made the plan of four keys, and a person was to get them made for him, there being four doors bewixt his cell and the street. Having thus, as he thought, secured his liberty, he was too easily led into another scheme with Dunbar. Haggart thought himself certain of his own liberty, but he thought it would be a grand thing to clear the jail of all the prisoners. Laurie, another prisoner, proposed getting a stone, and tying it in a napkin, and some morning to knock down Hunter, the head jailor, and take the keys from him. Haggart was not fond of using the stone, as he did not want to hurt the jailor; and he

proposed, when Thomas Morrin came up to the man under sentence of death, to gag him into a closet at the head of the stairs, and take the keys from him; Dunbar and some others got the stone and put it into a bag.— On Tuesday, the 10th of October, about twelve o'clock, they noticed Hunter, the head turnkey, leave the jail to attend the Races, and shortly after, Morrin came up with two ministers, whom he locked in the cell with M'Grory, who was under sentence of death.— Shortly after, Haggart placed himself in the closet at the head of the stairs, where he had previously put the stone and bag. Dunbar then called up Morrin to let out the ministers. He came up accordingly with a plate of potatoe-soup for M'Grory, and when he got up to the top of the stairs, Haggart came out upon him from the closet, and the pushing open of the door knocked the plate out of his hand; he then struck him one blow with the stone, dashed him down, and without the loss of a moment, pulled the key of the outer door from his pocket; he gave only one blow with the stone and threw it down. Dunbar picked it up, but no more blows were given, so that Morrin must have received his other blows in falling. Haggart observed Dunbar on the top of him, rifling his breast for the key which he had got. Simpson had a hold of

Morrin's shoulders, and was beating his back upon the steps of the stair. Haggart rushed past them, crossed the stair as steadily as he could, pulled the key from his pocket, and opened the outer door.

On getting out at the door he ran round the east corner of the jail wall, and then walked rapidly round the back street, and round a great part of the town, till he came to the back of the King's Arms Inn. Dunbar made up to him, and that very moment they saw a policeman coming right up to meet them; on this they wheeled about and ran, but Dunbar was taken before he ran ten yards, and Haggart had the mortification to see his fellow adventurer secured. He once thought of bolting among them to rescue him, but the mob was too great for him. He went up through the yard of the King's Arms without meeting any body, crossed the High Street, and ran down the Vennel to the Nith. He kept along the waterside till he got away to the east of Cumlungan Wood, having run nearly ten miles in less than an hour. He then got on the high road to Annan, when he saw a post chaise at full gallop almost within twenty yards of him. Upon this he buttoned his coat, and leapt a hedge into a field where some people were raising potatoes. They all joined the police-man, who had got out of the chaise

in pursuit of him; he crossed the field at a slapping pace, and made for Cumlungan Wood, he bolted over a very deep ditch covered with briars, and ran a few steps along the side of the hedge, to make the policemen think he was going into the wood; he then wheeled round, louted, and when they went up one side of the ditch he ran down the other; little did they know he was so near them, he could have breathed upon John Richardson as he passed him. In this way he came to the cross road, which leads from the Nith to the public road and never did a fox double the hounds in better style.

He then made for Annan; and getting on a mile or two on the Carlisle road, he went into a belt of planting. Watching an opportunity, he dived into a hay-stack, and lay there till next day at two o'clock in the afternoon, when he heard a woman ask a boy if that lad was taken who had broke out of Dumfries jail. The boy answered 'No; but the jailor died last night.' On hearing this, Haggart lay insensible for a good while. He left the stack, and seeing a scarecrow in a field, he took some of the old clothes, and put them on to disguise himself. On the Wednesday night he slept in a hay loft; in the morning two men were feeding their horses, and he overheard them speaking about him; he started for Carlisle, and

then to Newcastle, where he stopped for some days and along with one Fleming, picked up £22. in the market from a man; here he passed close to Richardson, who was in quest of him, but was not noticed. He left Newcastle for Scotland; got upon the Berwick coach; then took a ticket for Edinburgh, but went only to Dunbar. Next morning set off for Edinburgh, where he met with a gentleman, and took the same lodgings with him in the Lord Duncan Tavern, Cannon-rate. After separating from the gentleman, he stopt at Jock's Lodge with a friend; while there he visited his father and some acquaintances, disguised in woman's clothes. One night, dressed in his own clothes, taking a walk from Portobello to Leith, he met Capt. Ross of the Leith police: their eyes met and both stood motionless, till Haggart feigned to pull a pistol from his breast. Ross knowing him too well before, quickly took to his heels; and Haggart instantly turned through the fields, and made to Jock's Lodge. Then crossing the Forth, he went through Cupar to Dundee, disguised in sailor's clothes:— here he committed a number of depredations; then returned to Newhaven, and went on to Edinburgh. Here the first thing he saw was a bill posted up, offering 70 guineas reward for his apprehension. This determined him to go north again. He arrived in

Dundee, and from thence went to Perth, and attended the fairs in Perth, Dunkeld, Kenmore, &c. and robbed some cattle-dealers to a considerable amount. One night, in his lodgings in Perth, two police-men came in upon him; but the determined manner in which he received them, made them hesitate in apprehending him, and Haggart gained an opportunity to escape. He left Perth for Glasgow, and made up his mind to go to Ireland, and started in the steam-boat. Here he was recognized by the Provost of Kircaldy, who went ashore at Lamlash: Haggart was ready to jump overboard, but the boat went off without the Provost. He landed in Belfast, where he attended fairs, &c. and was in continual scenes of robbing, knocking down, &c.—At Drummore market he was seized & taken before a magistrate. When asked what name he had, he answered, in high Tipperary, it was John M'Colgan, from Armagh. He was cross-examined, and shewn a Dublin paper, with a description of his person, &c. He denied being a Scotsman, and passed off the brogue so well, that the magistrate was in doubts, but he was ordered to be detained, and three yeomen sat in the court house to guard him. He plied them so well with drink that he prevailed on them to let a young woman bring him some supper; and when she came, he got leave to speak with her pri-

ately behind the boxes of the court, where there is a large window, he bolted right through the window without being hurt by the fall; he crossed the street, and got into an entry, where he saw his keepers below the window staring at each other. *He* started for Belfast, and then to Dublin, and paid his passage for America at the Pigeon house; but meeting with one called O'Brien, he changed his mind; here he robbed a man of 100 guineas in gold, and jaunted through the country in cars with women of bad fame. *He* was taken up for robbing a drover at Downpatrick, and put into jail, where he saw more scenes of wickedness than ever he had witnessed all his life. The women's room was immediately above the men's, and eight days' provisions was served out to them at one time: they blocked up the doors, made a hole betwixt the two apartments, and kept possession in the most riotous manner. Before his trial he bribed the drover not to swear he was the person, and he was banished for seven years. In jail he was visited by the magistrate of Drummore who ordered the jailor to put him in strong irons.

*Haggart* denied that he had ever been in Drummore, and said his name was O'Brien, and not M'Colgan. *He* was moved to Kilmainham jail among other criminals; here he made his escape, but was caught, by some

of the prisoners informing the jailor of his designs.

Next day the whole of the prisoners were called out into the court-yard, and in a few minutes John Richardson from Dumfries made his appearance, and began his examination. He passed him once, but upon a second look over he recognized him, and said, Davie, do you ken me; Haggart turned to the jailor, and in a master piece of Irish brogue, said, What docs the man say? Don't you know him, was the answer; he said he did not; but John persisted that he did. On the second day he was put in irons, and conducted by John and an Irish Officer to Dumfries. They were three days and three nights on the road, and he experienced great kindness from the officers. On their approach to Dumfries, thousands of people met them with torches in their hands. From Dumfries he was conveyed to Edinburgh jail, and placed under the care of Captain Sibbald, who, he said, was the kindest jailor in the world. He was tried on the 11th of June, and the jury gave in a verdict of guilty. When the judge was passing the sentence, he said he grew dizzy and gasped for breath. He was carried back to jail, where he behaved in the most penitent manner, and wrote a history of his life for the benefit of his father, from which this narrative is a faithful extract.



## THE FOLLOWING SONG

Was made by Haggart the day after his condemnation; but his mind soon changed to a more serious subject, and his whole deportment was afterwards extremely pious and resigned.

Able and willing you will me find,  
Though bound in chains still free in mind;  
For with these things I'll ne'er be griev'd,  
Although of freedom I'm bereav'd.

In this vain world there is no rest,  
And life is but a span at best;  
The rich, the poor, the old, the young,  
Will all lie low before 'tis long.

I am a rogue, I don't deny,  
But never liv'd by treachery:  
To rob a poor man I disown—  
But only them of high renown.

Now for the crime that I'm condemn'd,  
The same I never did intend:  
Only my liberty to take,  
As I thought my life did lie at stake.

My life by perjury was sworn away,  
I'll say that to my dying day;  
Oh! treacherous S——, you did me betray,  
For all I wanted was—liberty.

No malice in my heart is found,  
To any man above the ground:  
Now, all good people that speak of me,  
You may say I died for my liberty.

Although in chains you see me fast,  
 No frowns upon my friends pray cast :  
 For my relations were not to blame,  
 And I brought my parents to grief and shame.

Now all you ramblers in mourning go.  
 For the prince of ramblers is lying low ;  
 And all you maidens who love the game,  
 Put on your mourning hoods again.

And all your powers of music chaunt,  
 To the memory of my dying rant ;  
 A song of melancholy sing,  
 Till you make the very rafters ring.

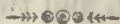
Farewell relations and friends also,  
 The time is nigh when I must go,  
 As for foes, I have none but one,  
 But to the same I've done no wrong.

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## EXECUTION.

EARLY on the morning of his execution, David Haggart joined earnestly in devotional exercise with his ministerial attendant. After the chaplain of the jail had given a prayer, one of the officers of justice appeared, and ordered all the persons in the room to retire, as he had something to communicate to the unhappy prisoner. Haggart immediately exclaimed, in a hurried tone, "O! I suppose it is the executioner." His firmness for a moment abandoned him, and he walked rap-

dly across the cell with his arms folded, and with dark and deep despair strongly painted on his countenance. He speedily, however, regained his composure: and when the executioner appeared, at once allowed his arms to be bound: he was then removed to a hall in the lower part of the Lock-up-house, where he was received by two of the clergymen of Edinburgh, and the magistrates. After prayers the procession proceeded to the scaffold.— The conduct of the unfortunate youth there was in the highest degree becoming. While the beneficial influence of religion was apparent in his whole demeanor; his natural firmness of character never for a moment forsook him. He kneeled down, and uttered an earnest prayer; and after addressing a few words of deep and anxious exhortation to the great multitude by which he was surrounded, he met his fate with the same intrepidity which distinguished all the actions of his short but guilty and eventful life.



Haggart terminated his mortal career on the gallows in the 21st year of his age.— Though young in years, he was old in iniquity; and his story unfolds as undeviating course of wickedness as ever disgraced human nature; it was related at various times

by himself, while under sentence of death; and thus, though the remembrance of the evil he committed survives him, unfortunately no good is recorded of him, excepting his, we hope, not too late repentance. *His adventures fall far short of those of Barrington, Vaux, &c.*—he must be classed as the hero of a humbler sphere, without the atrocity that marks a kind of criminal grandeur, and demands abhorrent vengeance, while lesser villainies only contemptuous stripes. He committed, however, at least one murder, that of *Morrin*, the turnkey of *Dumfries jail*, for which he suffered the merited sentence of the law. He never appears to have wanted courage in any of the appalling incidents or dangers to which his turpitude exposed him.

He was tall in stature, and of a commanding aspect; limbs so flexible, that they could turn any way at pleasure, and legs that in speed resembled the deer when first started from its native plains.

He mentioned some peculiar circumstances of an over-hasty birth, and two teeth when born with an unusual forwardness of intellect and speech. Surely they were gifts not to be misused. On one of his apprehensions, being under close confinement in *Edinburgh*, he said, "I cannot help it; I was born for a thief; look at my fingers, they are all of an equal length, like the prongs of a fork, and

us they never fail me." This was true; his fingers reached all to one exact length, and is rather curious, but by no means singular, or as being confined to that individual. The gentleman present, who was esteemed for his researches in philosophy and nature said, "My lad, make a good use of your long-fork-fingers, as many have done before you; one of the best emperors that ever lived had the like, and so had a celebrated professor of music; the one was a virtuous, just, enlightened, and most exalted sovereign; and the other, what Pope terms, a noble work—an honest man; and I could quote several other examples."—Haggart only sneered at the remark and advice, joined together, and said, "Fate was fate."—An unhappy conclusion, for too many out of the right line, who let things come and go as they will, and never put their shoulders to the wheel, but accuse the destination of all their wants and woes.

Haggart gives the following account of his habits and the peculiar vices which marked his character, describing also some of those vicious characters by whom he was initiated to all the mysteries of iniquity.

"I never was given to drink, further than what promoted fun in society; but I was inordinately fond of raffles, cards, and dancing, and this led me to the company of loose females, that caused my ruin; and all I got I

spent profusely on them. Constancy was not my motto; like the grand Seignior, I threw my handkerchief first to one, and then to another, as fancy prompted; and my character for generosity urged them to meet me more than half way—A good disposed woman may work miracles with a man who loves her; but, alas for me! I only loved the reverse of all that is virtuous, and those who for money would chat and advise me in iniquity. On the other hand, my male companions learned me to be expert in sin; I grew in to such a state, that I dared not to think or reflect, night or day; I looked backward upon folly, and forward with dread; I was ashamed to look my parents and relations in the face, and I fatally quitted my home. Oh! my poor mother, how bitterly she took on! but I was lost to all feeling—the devil had the upper hand of me.

“My most dangerous associate was a young man named Barnard M’Guire, an Irishman, who went amongst us by the slang appellation of the *Darling of a Boy*; though of the sister kingdom, he was apprenticed to a tailor at Dumfries; but preferred the profession of a pick-pocket: he was tall, athletic, and courageous, and became my instructor in the science; in short, he was clever at every thing, and always gave me fair play as to my share; but we sometimes played the double on our

companions, even Barnard's own brother, who was also a thief."

Haggart, in his remarks in prison, cautioned persons against needlessly and carelessly exposing their money to view. One example he gives is as follows:—We observed a gentleman, one morning, with a heap of notes in his hand, coming out of a banking-house. It was my turn to follow him. I did so, from place to place, without any chance offering; something or another intervened, and it was full five in the evening before I could make a snatch at him; and then, to my great disappointment, I got only eleven pounds. He must have been paying it away, for it was in the very identical case I had seen him put the notes in the morning. While he was engaged in close conversation with a gentleman, I slipped past and robbed him so expertly that he was quite unconscious of the act.

When committed to Downpatrick jail, Haggart gives the following account of it:—

"I soon found my fellow prisoners a queer set of lads. They had all their *fancy women* and I was not long behind them in that respect. One lodged above me whom I took a fancy to, and used, through a hole in the top of my cell, to hand her up meat and liquor, and a part of every thing I had.

"The prisoners were here served out at three days' allowance at a time. One mor-

ing, after having received our usual supply, my fellow-prisoners and I agreed to block up the passage that led to our apartments, and break through to the women—They began to block up the doors with benches and tables, but I did not approve of that way, and began with the coal-spade to lift up the flags of the floor, and they all assisted me, and we barricaded the door so completely that the jailor could not get at us. We then broke through to the females, and served their doors the same and kept the premises two whole days, during which time we gave way to every wickedness and, of all the depraved scenes of my short and sinful life, none came up in licentiousness to the jail of Downpatrick. After this period of riot, we were broke in upon and secured. I was ironed and locked up in a cell, and kept in confinement till the day previous to my trial.

“Alas! a prison is the blackest and worst conducted place in the world; many a poor lad is brought to the gallows at last, because his first offence is punished by imprisonment; this teaches him evil ways; whereas, if he had been soundly flogged, and sent home to his friends or parents, he might have turned out a good man. I cannot say my bad habits were learned in jail; but this I can affirm they were confirmed there.