

18
LIFE

OF

DAVID HAGGART,

WHO WAS

Executed at Edinburgh, 18th July, 1821,

FOR

THE MURDER OF

THE DUMFRIES JAILOR.

CONTAINING

The whole of his depredations and Murders, faithfully copied from the large Book written by himself.—Being the whole substance, without the superfluity of language, brought into the following pages.—With an Account of his Behaviour at the place of Execution.



KILMARNOCK :

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OF SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH

L I F E
O F
D A V I D H A G G A R T .

DAVID HAGGART was born at a farm town, called the Golden Acre, near Cannon-mills, Edinburgh, on the 24th of June, 1800, his father was a game-keeper but afterwards a dog-trainer. He was early put to school, when 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 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 shop till 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 out-house, where he formerly kept a cuddie; he kept it there for several days, until the owner found it out by accident. At Leith races, in 1813, he enlisted in the Norfolk Militia; and learned the drum and bugle-horn; the regiment was disbanded about a year afterwards, and he was discharged.

His father was then living in the south-ack of the Canongate, Edinburgh, and he went home, when he was put as an apprentice to the Mill-wright and Engineering business, with Cockburn and Baird, in the Canongate, 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 not acquainted with many worthless characters, among whom was one Barney, an Irishman; he had been bred a taylor in Dumfries; he was older than Haggart, of great bodily strength, and a most skilful pick-pocket. Barney put him up to a num-

ber 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 Potobello races, and picked a gentleman's pocket of L.11.; the first ever Haggart attempted in day-light; with this took outside places on the Jedburgh coach, and got themselves genteelly dressed. They attempted St. James' fair at Kelso, and picked L.20. from two persons;—from thence they went to Dumfries, and stop 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 L.23. 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 L.100., in ten pound notes, and L10., 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 to the coach for Carlisle.

On other nights they got 2 gold watches; they took about L.70. in the 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 L.20. there; they were apprehended for this act, tried, and found guilty, and put back to prison, to be brought up for sentence of death at the end of the assizes. They broke 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 the saw, in company with a York pick-pocket, 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; he did not live in his father's house.

12 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, 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 pickpocket 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 stair, when he was met by Ross and another Policeman; a struggle commenced, but the three 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 battle; but the man only said, "Run, Haggart, run, I wont touch ye." Haggart took hold

of Forrest's hand, and ran even on to Dalkeith, without stopping; staid there all night, and stole twelve yards blue cloth; started at two o'clock next morning for Kelso, robbed a farmer of L.4., 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 different dwelling-houses; he met 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 house-breaking. His trial did not go on, and he was sent to jail.—Here he got acquaint with a lad, John Dunbar, who was under sentence of transportation. He also got acquaint with some people belonging to the town, who seemed willing to do him a favour; so *Haggart* made the plans of four keys, and a person

was to get them made for him, there being four doors betwixt 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 stair, 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 stair, 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 to the top of the stair, 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 policemen, 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 briers, and ran a few steps along the side of the hedge to make the police-men think he was going into the wood; he then wheeled round, louted, and when they went up the 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 scare crow 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 L.22 in the market from a man; here he passed close to John Richardson who was in quest of him. but was not noticed. He left Newcastle for Scotland, he got upon the Berwick Coach, and then took a ticket for Edinburgh, but only went to Dunbar in the Coach, remained in Dunbar, and set off for Edinburgh next morning; met with a gentleman, and took the same lodgings

with him in the Lord Duncan Tavern,
 Manongate. After separating from the
 gentleman, he stopt at Jock's Lodge with
 his friend; while here he visited his father,
 and some acquaintances, disguised in wo-
 men's clothes. One night, dressed in his
 own clothes, taking a walk from Portobello
 to Leith, he met Captain Ross of the
 Leith Police, their eyes met, and both
 stood motionless until *Haggart* feigned to
 pull a pistol from his breast, the Captain
 knowing him too well before, immediately
 took to his heels, and *Haggart* immediately
 crossed through the fields, and made to
 Jock's Lodge; he then crossed the Forth,
 and went through Cupar to Dundee, and
 disguised himself in sailor's clothes; here
 he committed a number of depredations.
 He then returned to Newhaven, and went
 on to Edinburgh, and the first thing he
 saw was a bill posted up offering a reward
 of 70 guineas for his apprehension; this
 determined him to go north again; he ar-
 rived in Dundee, and from thence went
 to Perth; he attended the fairs in Perth,
 Ankeld, 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 de-
 termined manner in which he received
 them, made them hesitate in apprehend-

ing, 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 recognised by the Provost of Kircaldy, who went ashore at Lamlash; *Haggart* was ready to jump overboard, but the boat came 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 and taken before a magistrate; he was asked what name he had, he answered in high Tipperara, 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 privately 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 into an entry, where he saw his keepers below the window staring a

each other; he started for Belfast and then to Dublin, and paid his passage for America at the Pigeon-house, but meeting in 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 provision 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 to swear he was not the person, and he was banished for 7 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 morning the whole prisoners, consisting of some hundreds, were taken down

to a yard, and ranked up in companies of twenty each. In a few minutes John Richardson made his appearance, accompanied by the two jailors and a turnkey. John began his inspection, and went over the whole of them; then making a second look-through, he stopped at *Haggart*, held out his hand, and said, 'Do you ken me, Davie?' He turned to the jailor, and in a masterpiece of Irish brogue, said, 'What does the man say?' 'Don't you know him?' was the answer. He replied, 'Troth and by my soul, I know nothing at all about him.' But John persisted that he knew him, and he was conveyed to the condemned yard; the jailor telling him, if he was a Scotchman he was greatly mistaken, for he had the brogue as well as ere a boy in Ireland,—but time would try all. He was nearly two days in the condemned yard, during which he had two visits from John Richardson; but he stoutly denied that he had ever seen him.

On the evening of the second day *Haggart* was taken to the head Police-office, and heavily loaded with irons. An iron belt was fixed round his waist, with his wrists pinioned to each side of it; a chain passed from the front of the belt and joined the centre of a chain, each end of which was padlocked round his ankles, and a chain

passed from each wrist to each ankle. In this dreadful state of torture and confinement, he was conducted by John Richardson, and an Irish officer of the name of Robison, to Dumfries. They were three days and two nights upon the road, and all the time he never had his hand to his mouth, and was fed like a sucking turkey in bedlam, and treated like a helpless infant. As to the officers who conveyed him, never could man behave better to his own son than they both did to him. He had known John Richardson before, and had long been acquainted with his humane disposition, which was tried and proved on this occasion. They travelled a good way on the road before he would acknowledge that ever he had seen John; but he saw that it was of no use to keep up his pretended ignorance any longer. Indeed, from the time he was placed in the condemned cells of Kilmainham, he had only done so out of obstinacy.

On their approach towards Dumfries, which was in the dark, there were many thousands of people on the road, many of them with torches in their hands, waiting his arrival; and when he got to the jail-door, it was scarcely possible to get him out of the coach for the multitude—all crowding for a sight of Haggart the

MURDERER. Some seemed sorry, and some terrified for him; but there was not one of them all so sorry, or so terrified as himself. He plunged through them, rattling his chains, and making a great show of courage, but his heart was shaking at the thought of poor Merrin. As he went up the narrow stair to the cells, he had to pass the very spot where he struck him, and, oh! it was like fire under his feet.

He was locked up in his old cell, and the greater part of the Irish irons were taken off him. He was kept at Drumfries about three weeks, during which he was twice examined before the Sheriff; but they could not get what they call a *declaration* out of him, for he knew that would be used against him, so he thought it as well to keep his tongue within his teeth, and this he would advise every man who is accused of a crime to do, whether he is innocent or guilty. But when the examination was over, he offered to tell the whole of his story to them *privately*, and he did tell a good deal of it.

From Dumfries he was conveyed to Edinburgh jail, and placed once more under the charge of Captain Sibbald, the kindest and the best jailor in the world. His word may be taken for this, as he has had some experience. He was soon after

dicted to stand his trial before the High Court of Justiciary, for the murder of Thomas Morrin.

In about a fortnight, the day of his trial came. He had been carried the evening before from the Calton Jail to the lock-up-house in the old town, and he was taken into the Court about ten o'clock on the morning of the 11th of June.

We shall conclude this Narrative, in his own words:—"Many witnesses were examined against me, and some of them did not speak the truth; but I say nothing against them, for perhaps they were only mistaken. I was fully as wicked as they made me. There was *one witness*, who would have said that he knew of our plan, and our only object was liberty, not to murder poor Thomas Morrin. But this would have made no difference, for it was the pleasure of God Almighty that I should come to an end.

All that man could do was done for me in my trial, and I had got hopes till the Judge began to speak; but then my spirits fell, for his speaking was sore against me. I did not altogether despair when I saw the Jury talking together.—But, oh!—when they said Guilty! my very heart broke; but I was even then too proud to show my feelings, and I almost bit my lip

through in hiding them. When the Judge was passing the awful sentence, I turned dizzy, and gasped for breath. They say I looked careless, but they could not see within me. I did not know what had happened, or where I was—I thought of every thing in a minute—I thought of my father—I thought of my mother, who died of a broken heart—I thought of escape, and very near made a plunge over the heads of the crowd—then I could have cried out. When the sentence was over I gathered my thoughts, and my heart was as hard as ever; for I said, “Well the man that is born to be hanged, will not be drowned!” This was very wicked but I could not help it, for I had no command of my thoughts or words.

But these wild and wicked thoughts soon left me. Every body was very kind to me. How this happens, I cannot tell, for from my infancy my hand has been against every man, and I never saw a human being without trying to do them a harm.—This kindness is an awful lesson to me now, but it has done my heart good, for it is the sorest punishment I have met with yet in this world. I have been visited by several clergymen. They have prayed much with me and for me. I told them I had no words to pray, but they taught

ne, made me read my Bible, and gave me hopes of mercy in Heaven---at least such hopes as a poor miserable wretch like me can have, for my sins stick close to me.

I have no thought now but death, and 't is coming so near, that I must forget this world, and think only of the next.—

I have told all I remember of my life truly.—I hope the tale will shew my old comrades, if they ever see it, that their wicked ways will bring them to untimely ends.”

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 requested all the persons present to retire, as he had something to communicate to the unhappy prisoner. *Haggart* immediately exclaimed in a hurried tone, “Oh! I suppose it is the executioner.” His firmness for a moment abandoned him, and he walked rapidly 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 did appear, 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 demeanour, 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.

The following Lines were made by *Haggart*, the day after his condemnation; but his mind soon changed to a more serious subject, and his whole deportment was extremely pious.

ABLE and willing you will me find,
 no' bound in chains, still free in mind;
 for with these things I'll ne'er be griev'd,
 tho' 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,
 all all lie low before it's long.

I'm a rogue, I don't deny,
 but never liv'd by treachery;
 and to rob a poor man I disown,
 not them that are of high renown.

Now, for the crime I am condemned,
 the same I never did intend;
 only my liberty to take,
 I thought my life did lie at stake.

My life, by perjury, was sworn away,
 I say that to my dying day.
 O treacherous S——, you did me betray,
 all I wanted was liberty.

If malice in my heart is found,
 in any man above the ground;
 now, all good people that speak of me,
 I may say I died for my liberty.

Although in chains you see me fast,
 No frown upon my friends you'll 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 veils again.

And all you 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 come that I must go;
 As for foes, I have but one,
 But to the same I've done no wrong.

FINIS.