BORDER MEMORIES;

OR,

SKETCHES OF PROMINENT MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE BORDER.

BY THE LATE

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OF CAYERS CARRE.

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he led them with great bravery, and fell at Steinkirk, aged only twenty-one. The sorrows of his mother were described in a ballad of the day, some lines of which I quote:—

"O wherefore should I busk my head,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
Twice my true love has me forsook,
And says he'd never love me mair.
Now Arthur's Seat shall be my bed,
The sheets shall ne'er be pressed by me;
St Anton's well shall be my drink
Since my true love's forsaken me.
O Martinmas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaf off the tree?
O gentle death, when wilt thou come
And take a life that wearies me?"

Having mentioned that Lady Barbara Erskine's son Angus raised the Camerons, or 26th Foot, it may be interesting to notice that her brother, the tenth Earl Mar, raised the Scots Fusileers, the 21st Regiment.

The Marquis Douglas married, secondly, Lady Mary Kerr, of the house of Lothian, by whom he had two children—Archibald, who became the heir; and Lady Jane, who married Sir John Stewart of Grandtully at the age of forty-eight, and had twins at fifty-one, which many thought were surreptitious.

Archibald succeeded as third Marquis in 1700, aged only six, and in consideration of his illustrious descent was created by Queen Anne, when he was but nine, Duke of Douglas, with limitation to the heirs of his body.

Personally he had no claim to ducal honours, for he was almost a nonentity, being celebrated for no particular acquirement but that of fencing, which produced in him a taste for duelling. He used to practise fencing with Captain John Kerr, a natural son of his brother-in-law who visited at Douglas. Kerr was a first-rate fencer, being able to remove a button from his adversary's coat without cutting the garment. The Duke was jealous of his friend's superior fencing; but besides this, seeing his Grace's taste for inferior company, he took the liberty of cautioning him against it. This no doubt increased his feeling against Kerr, and when he suspected the young man of making up to his sister, Lady Jane, the Duke's displeasure knew no bounds, and he determined on shooting him, which he did when Kerr was asleep in his bed. The Duke of course fled, but the matter was soon hushed up, and his Grace returned. Human life was not so much thought of at that time, and human law not so justly dealt out as now.

The Duke afterwards married, at the age of sixty-two, a lady of the same name—Miss Douglas of Mains—who was well advanced in years also, or at any rate in the meridian of life. There was no issue, and though the Duke had previously made a settlement in favour of the house of Hamilton, excluding his sister, to whom he behaved very ill, he was induced, probably under the influence of the Duchess, who must have felt for the treatment Lady Jane had received from her husband, though she was dead before the marriage, to alter his arrangements, and to substitute his nephew, Lady Jane's son, whom he appointed his heir. This no doubt displeased the Hamiltons, and caused the litigation which did not finally succeed,—though the Scotch Courts decided in their favour; for the House of Lords reversed the decision, determining in favour of Mr Stewart in 1771, several years after the Duke's death, the law-suit costing an immense sum of money. Mr Stewart accordingly assumed the name of Douglas, and took possession of the estates, said to be worth £60,000 a year, and some time after was created Lord Douglas. After enjoying the title and property many years, and marrying daughters of the Dukes of Montrose and Buccleuch in succession, he died at the advanced age of seventy-nine, leaving several sons and daughters. Three sons inherited in turn, but none of them left issue, and at length the property passed to the child of a sister of the last Lord Douglas, the present Countess of Home.

The four Baron Douglases were quiet, good men, leaving no particular marks behind them. The first used to entertain, and, like David Hume, preferred port, which he placed before his guests after dinner. A story is told of Lord Justice-Clerk...
Riccalton lived, before he was appointed to Hobkirk in 1725, the year Thomson went to London, is much to be praised. Riccalton composed a poem on Winter, which Thomson well knew, though it was never published, except, I believe, in Magazines, but I have looked in vain for it in the *Scots Magazine*. Thomson's own words are—"Mr Riccalton's poem on Winter, which I still have, first put the design into my head. In it are some masterly strokes that awakened me." Thomson means that Mr Riccalton put the design of writing the "Seasons" into his head, so there is an overpowering debt of gratitude due to the minister of Hobkirk for prompting such an immortal poem.

**George Ridpath**, minister of Stichill, must have died about the same time as Riccalton paid the debt of nature. I have no particulars as to his professional career, but he was an author of repute, his "Border History" being a most interesting and instructive book, especially to the antiquary and genealogist. The work, which is posthumous, was published by his brother Philip Ridpath, minister of Hutton in Berwickshire, an author himself, in 1776, and dedicated to Hugh, second Duke of Northumberland, the descendant of the Percys renowned in the Border, as well as in the general history of the country.

There was another George Ridpath, who, it is supposed, wrote several historical works which were published anonymously, very early last century, and it is possible he may have been the father of the two ministers.

**John Home** flourished in Ridpath's time, and long afterwards, for he lived to a great age.* He was ordained parish minister of Athelstaneford, where the poet Blair had previously been the incumbent, in 1750, having been licensed as a preacher on the 4th April 1745. His great dedication to tragic verse was a bar to his success in the clerical profession, and though he continued for some time in the ministry, he at length abandoned it, and resigned his living, which stopped the proceedings that were being taken to depose him.

Mr Home's celebrated tragedy of "Douglas" was first acted in Edinburgh in 1756. Several clergymen attended the performance, which led to an ecclesiastical conflict. But a love for theatricals in those days was not the only clerical inconsistency. There was a great deal of drinking, and I have read that a minister, who would have been ashamed to have been seen at the play-house seeing the performance of "Douglas," would nevertheless sit at his cups till he had consumed five bottles of wine, which earned for him the sobriquet of Dr Magnum Bonum, or rather Bonum Magnum. John Home sustained no pecuniary loss from the resignation of his benefice, for he got government employment and a pension, the latter being his mainstay, and he was enabled to live in comfort, and to enjoy the society of his literary friends in Edinburgh, where he finally located himself; and at that period, it must have been truly an enjoyable place for a man of letters. David Hume was one of John's most intimate friends, and there never was a difference between them except on the subject of wine and the spelling of their names. The philosopher liked port, then but lately introduced into Scotland, and the poet preferred claret; and with respect to the orthography of their surnames, David preferred *Hume*, and John, *Home*. Both are pronounced Hume, and in point of euphony, the philosopher had the best of the argument, which his own family must have thought, for instead of being Home of Ninewells, it is now Hume. A number of the class, and especially the head of it, still stick to the o, though in all cases, I believe, the name so spelt is pronounced as if spelt with u. In the same way Ker, the orthography of which has been referred to, is pronounced as if spelt Carre.

Two authors—Maunder and Haig—make John Home to be a Roxburghshire man, and born at Ancrum, while others describe him as being born at Leith. I do not profess to settle this point,
but whether born at Ancrum or Leith, he was descended from the older Border family of Home of Cowdenknows, through their ancient cadets the Homes of Bassendean, and, moreover, his wife, who was his cousin, was the elder daughter of the Rev. William Home of Fogo, who became the representative of the house of Bassendean on the death of the descendants of his elder brother, and whose fifth son, John, purchased the estate from his cousin, bequeathing it to his son, the late General Home of the Grenadier Guards. With this pedigree, notwithstanding the uncertainty of Home’s birth-place, I think he is well entitled to shine among the Roxburghshire stars.

JOSEPH LECK was minister of Yetholm for some time after he middle of last century. I bring this divine before you as a man who appears to have been much respected by, and well known to, his parishioners—even the gypsies, a class of notables, who will hereafter be introduced to you in their proper place. The anecdote which I wish to relate proves how much he was respected by that dusky band, and also verifies what is said in “Guy Mannering” about them, viz., that though “they’re queer devils, there’s baith gude and ill about the gypsies.” Mr Leck on one occasion had been visiting his friends across the Border, and on his return in the evening, got benighted on a drove track in crossing the hills on horseback. Coming upon an old shepherd’s cot, said to be haunted, Mr Leck, though a man of nerve and not easily frightened, became somewhat afraid when he saw a grim looking visage peeping behind a curtain which acted as a door to the cot, and his alarm increased when he saw outside hazel-looking figures prowling about. Mr Leck felt himself in an uncomfortable position, especially when his dusky friend bolted out upon him from the cot, seized his horse’s reins, and demanded his money. He, however, soon recognized his tawney parishioner to be gleed-neckit Will, the gipsy chief, when the following colloquy took place:

“Dear me, William,” said the minister in his usual quiet manner, “can this be you? Ye’re surely no serious wi’ me? Ye wadna sae far wrang your character for a good neighbour for the bit trifle I hae to gie, William?”

“Lord saif us, Mr Leck,” said Will, quitting the reins of Mr Leck’s horse, and lifting his hat with great respect, “whae wad hae thocht o’ meeting you out owre here awa? Ye needna gripe for any siller to me—I wad nae touch a plack o’ your gear, nor a hair o’ your head, for a’ the gowd o’ Teviotdale. I ken ye’ll no do us an ill turn for this mistake, and I’ll e’en see you safe through the eerie staw. It’s no reckoned a canny bit, mair ways than ane, but I wat weel ye’ll no be feared for the dead, and I’ll take care o’ the living.”

Will accordingly gave the Rev. Mr Leck a safe convoy through the haunted pass, and notwithstanding this ugly mistake, continued ever after an inoffensive neighbour to the minister, who, on his part observed a prudent and inviolable secrecy on the subject of the rencontre during the life-time of gleed-neckit Will.

DAVID CLERK, Minister of Maxton, deserves a passing remark. He was a man of lively manners, and of great wit, which of course made him a most agreeable companion.

Matthew Henry says—“Innocent mirth, soberly, seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing; fits for business, and helps to soften the toils and chagrin of life; but, when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless.” Alas! I am afraid poor David Clerk, by indulging in too much hilarity, verified the learned divine’s remark, for he became imprudent and embarrassed, the result being, as Dr Somerville states, “a depression of spirits, bad health, and a premature death.” As far as I can ascertain, Mr Clerk must have died somewhere about 1776, when

STEPHEN OLIVER was appointed, having been translated from Innerleithen, where he had been Incumbent for twenty years. He continued at Maxton for twenty-seven years, dying in 1803, aged eighty-nine. He was noted for his fidelity, diligence, and zeal; was a man of practical piety; like Enoch, walked with God; and when his body was committed to the
sufficiently, or turn to the account he might, and though long resident at Lessudden, he was born, in 1785, at Longnook, once a parish, but now annexed to Ancrum.

John Younger was a man of great intelligence, and much general information. His Prize Essay on the Sabbath gained him great fame far and near; and his poetry, which more concerns me now, is by no means contemptible. Since his death, a book of his on angling, of which he was once very fond, has been published.

Alexander Hume, a native of Kelso, was born in 1809, his father having been a respectable tradesman there. His history is full of interest. About the age of fifteen, Hume was missing one day, and it was afterwards discovered he had joined a band of strolling players, with whom he continued some months. He was very popular with the Coryphaeons of the band, being a good singer, actor, and dancer, but conscience soon upbraided him for leading such a wretched life (and, my friends, can you witness a company of strolling players and not feel the degradation of such an occupation?), and he returned home to his family, who had, in the interim, removed from Kelso to London. He now determined to turn over a new leaf in his history, and at length became a most respectable and respected young man, entering into commercial life in London; and such was the opinion of his employers that the fidelity bond they took on his entering their service they soon voluntarily cancelled, to show their regard for him, as well as to mark their sense of his probity and good conduct. At the same time, while going on steadily with his mercantile pursuits, he was cultivating, during his leisure hours, his musical and poetical talents, which were of a high order.

His first song was sent to one of the London Magazines, but the editor, not being able perhaps to appreciate a true Scotch lyric, threw it aside. It was, however, soon rescued from the editor’s basket of rejected compositions by one of the staff who had been better acquainted with our national poetry,