

The Black Dwarf

by

Walter Scott

Web-Books.Com

The Black Dwarf

Introduction by "Jedediah Cleishbotham"	3
Introduction To The Black Dwarf.....	7
Chapter 1.....	12
Chapter 2.....	16
Chapter 3.....	22
Chapter 4.....	28
Chapter 5.....	35
Chapter 6.....	41
Chapter 7.....	44
Chapter 8.....	52
Chapter 9.....	57
Chapter 10.....	62
Chapter 11.....	69
Chapter 12.....	75
Chapter 13.....	80
Chapter 14.....	88
Chapter 15.....	93
Chapter 16.....	99
Chapter 17.....	103
Chapter 18.....	108

Introduction by "Jedediah Cleishbotham"

Tales Of My Landlord

Collected And Reported By Jedediah Cleishbotham,
Schoolmaster And Parish-Clerk Of Gandercleugh.

As I may, without vanity, presume that the name and official description prefixed to this Proem will secure it, from the sedate and reflecting part of mankind, to whom only I would be understood to address myself, such attention as is due to the sedulous instructor of youth, and the careful performer of my Sabbath duties, I will forbear to hold up a candle to the daylight, or to point out to the judicious those recommendations of my labours which they must necessarily anticipate from the perusal of the title-page. Nevertheless, I am not unaware, that, as Envy always dogs Merit at the heels, there may be those who will whisper, that albeit my learning and good principles cannot (lauded be the heavens) be denied by any one, yet that my situation at Gandercleugh hath been more favourable to my acquisitions in learning than to the enlargement of my views of the ways and works of the present generation. To the which objection, if, peradventure, any such shall be started, my answer shall be threefold:

First, Gandercleugh is, as it were, the central part--the navel (SI FAS SIT DICERE) of this our native realm of Scotland; so that men, from every corner thereof, when travelling on their concernments of business, either towards our metropolis of law, by which I mean Edinburgh, or towards our metropolis and mart of gain, whereby I insinuate Glasgow, are frequently led to make Gandercleugh their abiding stage and place of rest for the night. And it must be acknowledged by the most sceptical, that I, who have sat in the leathern armchair, on the left-hand side of the fire, in the common room of the Wallace Inn, winter and summer, for every evening in my life, during forty years bypast (the Christian Sabbaths only excepted), must have seen more of the manners and customs of various tribes and people, than if I had sought them out by my own painful travel and bodily labour. Even so doth the tollman at the well-frequented turn-pike on the Wellbraehead, sitting at his ease in his own dwelling, gather more receipt of custom, than if, moving forth upon the road, he were to require a contribution from each person whom he chanced to meet in his journey, when, according to the vulgar adage, he might possibly be greeted with more kicks than halfpence.

But, secondly, supposing it again urged, that Ithacus, the most wise of the Greeks, acquired his renown, as the Roman poet hath assured us, by visiting states and men, I reply to the Zoilus who shall adhere to this objection, that, DE FACTO, I have seen states and men also; for I have visited the famous cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the former twice, and the latter three times, in the course of my earthly pilgrimage. And, moreover, I had the honour to sit in the General Assembly (meaning, as an auditor, in the galleries thereof), and have heard as much goodly speaking on the law of patronage, as, with the fructification thereof in mine own understanding, hath made me be considered as an oracle upon that doctrine ever since my safe and happy return to Gandercleugh.

Again--and thirdly, If it be nevertheless pretended that my information and knowledge of mankind, however extensive, and however painfully acquired, by constant domestic enquiry, and by foreign travel, is, nathless, incompetent to the task of recording the pleasant narratives of my Landlord, I will let these critics know, to their own eternal shame and confusion as well as to the abashment and discomfiture of all who shall rashly take up a song against me, that I am NOT the writer, redacter, or compiler, of the Tales of my Landlord; nor am I, in one single iota, answerable for their contents, more or less. And now, ye generation of critics, who raise yourselves up as if it were brazen serpents, to hiss with your tongues, and to smite with your stings, bow yourselves down to your native dust, and acknowledge that yours have been the thoughts of ignorance, and the words of vain foolishness. Lo! ye are caught in your own snare, and your own pit hath yawned for you. Turn, then, aside from the task that is too heavy for you; destroy not your teeth by gnawing a file; waste not your strength by spurning against a castle wall; nor spend your breath in contending in swiftness with a fleet steed; and let those weigh the Tales of my Landlord, who shall bring with them the scales of candour cleansed from the rust of prejudice by the hands of intelligent modesty. For these alone they were compiled, as will appear from a brief narrative which my zeal for truth compelled me to make supplementary to the present Proem.

It is well known that my Landlord was a pleasing and a facetious man, acceptable unto all the parish of Gandercleugh, excepting only the Laird, the Exciseman, and those for whom he refused to draw liquor upon trust. Their causes of dislike I will touch separately, adding my own refutation thereof.

His honour, the Laird, accused our Landlord, deceased, of having encouraged, in various times and places, the destruction of hares, rabbits, fowls black and grey, partridges, moor-pouts, roe-deer, and other birds and quadrupeds, at unlawful seasons, and contrary to the laws of this realm, which have secured, in their wisdom, the slaughter of such animals for the great of the earth, whom I have remarked to take an uncommon (though to me, an unintelligible) pleasure therein. Now, in humble deference to his honour, and in justifiable defence of my friend deceased, I reply to this charge, that howsoever the form of such animals might appear to be similar to those so protected by the law, yet it was a mere DECEPTIO VISUS; for what resembled hares were, in fact, HILL-KIDS, and those partaking of the appearance of moor- fowl, were truly WOOD PIGEONS and consumed and eaten EO NOMINE, and not otherwise.

Again, the Exciseman pretended, that my deceased Landlord did encourage that species of manufacture called distillation, without having an especial permission from the Great, technically called a license, for doing so. Now, I stand up to confront this falsehood; and in defiance of him, his gauging-stick, and pen and inkhorn, I tell him, that I never saw, or tasted, a glass of unlawful aqua vitae in the house of my Landlord; nay, that, on the contrary, we needed not such devices, in respect of a pleasing and somewhat seductive liquor, which was vended and consumed at the Wallace Inn, under the name of MOUNTAIN DEW. If there is a penalty against manufacturing such a liquor, let him show me the statute; and when he does, I'll tell him if I will obey it or no.

Concerning those who came to my Landlord for liquor, and went thirsty away, for lack of present coin, or future credit, I cannot but say it has grieved my bowels as if the case had been mine own. Nevertheless, my Landlord considered the necessities of a thirsty soul, and would permit them, in extreme need, and when their soul was impoverished for lack of moisture, to drink to the full value of their watches and wearing apparel, exclusively of their inferior habiliments, which he was uniformly inexorable in obliging them to retain, for the credit of the house. As to mine own part, I may well say, that he never refused me that modicum of refreshment with which I am wont to recruit nature after the fatigues of my school. It is true, I taught his five sons English and Latin, writing, book-keeping, with a tincture of mathematics, and that I instructed his daughter in psalmody. Nor do I remember me of any fee or HONORARIUM received from him on account of these my labours, except the computations aforesaid. Nevertheless this compensation suited my humour well, since it is a hard sentence to bid a dry throat wait till quarter-day.

But, truly, were I to speak my simple conceit and belief, I think my Landlord was chiefly moved to waive in my behalf the usual requisition of a symbol, or reckoning, from the pleasure he was wont to take in my conversation, which, though solid and edifying in the main, was, like a well-built palace, decorated with facetious narratives and devices, tending much to the enhancement and ornament thereof. And so pleased was my Landlord of the Wallace in his replies during such colloquies, that there was no district in Scotland, yea, and no peculiar, and, as it were, distinctive custom therein practised, but was discussed betwixt us; insomuch, that those who stood by were wont to say, it was worth a bottle of ale to hear us communicate with each other. And not a few travellers, from distant parts, as well as from the remote districts of our kingdom, were wont to mingle in the conversation, and to tell news that had been gathered in foreign lands, or preserved from oblivion in this our own.

Now I chanced to have contracted for teaching the lower classes with a young person called Peter, or Patrick, Pattieson, who had been educated for our Holy Kirk, yea, had, by the license of presbytery, his voice opened therein as a preacher, who delighted in the collection of olden tales and legends, and in garnishing them with the flowers of poesy, whereof he was a vain and frivolous professor. For he followed not the example of those strong poets whom I preposed to him as a pattern, but formed versification of a flimsy and modern texture, to the compounding whereof was necessary small pains and less thought. And hence I have chid him as being one of those who bring forward the fatal revolution prophesied by Mr. Robert Carey, in his Vaticination on the Death of the celebrated Dr. John Donne:

Now thou art gone, and thy strict laws will be
Too hard for libertines in poetry;
Till verse (by thee refined) in this last age
Turn ballad rhyme.

I had also disputations with him touching his indulging rather a flowing and redundant than a concise and stately diction in his prose exercitations. But notwithstanding these symptoms of inferior taste, and a humour of contradicting

his betters upon passages of dubious construction in Latin authors, I did grievously lament when Peter Pattieson was removed from me by death, even as if he had been the offspring of my own loins. And in respect his papers had been left in my care (to answer funeral and death-bed expenses), I conceived myself entitled to dispose of one parcel thereof, entitled, "Tales of my Landlord," to one cunning in the trade (as it is called) of bookselling. He was a mirthful man, of small stature, cunning in counterfeiting of voices, and in making facetious tales and responses, and whom I have to laud for the truth of his dealings towards me. Now, therefore, the world may see the injustice that charges me with incapacity to write these narratives, seeing, that though I have proved that I could have written them if I would, yet, not having done so, the censure will deservedly fall, if at all due, upon the memory of Mr. Peter Pattieson; whereas I must be justly entitled to the praise, when any is due, seeing that, as the Dean of St. Patrick's wittily and logically expresseth it,

That without which a thing is not,

Is CAUSA SINE QUA NON.

The work, therefore, is unto me as a child is to a parent; in the which child, if it proveth worthy, the parent hath honour and praise; but, if otherwise, the disgrace will deservedly attach to itself alone.

I have only further to intimate, that Mr. Peter Pattieson, in arranging these Tales for the press, hath more consulted his own fancy than the accuracy of the narrative; nay, that he hath sometimes blended two or three stories together for the mere grace of his plots. Of which infidelity, although I disapprove and enter my testimony against it, yet I have not taken upon me to correct the same, in respect it was the will of the deceased, that his manuscript should be submitted to the press without diminution or alteration. A fanciful nicety it was on the part of my deceased friend, who, if thinking wisely, ought rather to have conjured me, by all the tender ties of our friendship and common pursuits, to have carefully revised, altered, and augmented, at my judgment and discretion. But the will of the dead must be scrupulously obeyed, even when we weep over their pertinacity and self-delusion. So, gentle reader, I bid you farewell, recommending you to such fare as the mountains of your own country produce; and I will only farther premise, that each Tale is preceded by a short introduction, mentioning the persons by whom, and the circumstances under which, the materials thereof were collected.

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM.

Introduction To The Black Dwarf

The ideal being who is here presented as residing in solitude, and haunted by a consciousness of his own deformity, and a suspicion of his being generally subjected to the scorn of his fellow-men, is not altogether imaginary. An individual existed many years since, under the author's observation, which suggested such a character. This poor unfortunate man's name was David Ritchie, a native of Tweeddale. He was the son of a labourer in the slate-quarries of Stobo, and must have been born in the misshapen form which he exhibited, though he sometimes imputed it to ill-usage when in infancy. He was bred a brush-maker at Edinburgh, and had wandered to several places, working at his trade, from all which he was chased by the disagreeable attention which his hideous singularity of form and face attracted wherever he came. The author understood him to say he had even been in Dublin.

Tired at length of being the object of shouts, laughter, and derision, David Ritchie resolved, like a deer hunted from the herd, to retreat to some wilderness, where he might have the least possible communication with the world which scoffed at him. He settled himself, with this view, upon a patch of wild moorland at the bottom of a bank on the farm of Woodhouse, in the sequestered vale of the small river Manor, in Peeblesshire. The few people who had occasion to pass that way were much surprised, and some superstitious persons a little alarmed, to see so strange a figure as Bow'd Davie (i.e. Crooked David) employed in a task, for which he seemed so totally unfit, as that of erecting a house. The cottage which he built was extremely small, but the walls, as well as those of a little garden that surrounded it, were constructed with an ambitious degree of solidity, being composed of layers of large stones and turf; and some of the corner stones were so weighty, as to puzzle the spectators how such a person as the architect could possibly have raised them. In fact, David received from passengers, or those who came attracted by curiosity, a good deal of assistance; and as no one knew how much aid had been given by others, the wonder of each individual remained undiminished.

The proprietor of the ground, the late Sir James Naesmith, baronet, chanced to pass this singular dwelling, which, having been placed there without right or leave asked or given, formed an exact parallel with Falstaff's simile of a "fair house built on another's ground;" so that poor David might have lost his edifice by mistaking the property where he had erected it. Of course, the proprietor entertained no idea of exacting such a forfeiture, but readily sanctioned the harmless encroachment.

The personal description of Elshender of Mucklestane-Moor has been generally allowed to be a tolerably exact and unexaggerated portrait of David of Manor Water. He was not quite three feet and a half high, since he could stand upright in the door of his mansion, which was just that height. The following particulars concerning his figure and temper occur in the SCOTS MAGAZINE for 1817, and are now understood to have been communicated by the ingenious Mr. Robert Chambers of Edinburgh, who has recorded with much spirit the traditions of the

Good Town, and, in other publications, largely and agreeably added to the stock of our popular antiquities. He is the countryman of David Ritchie, and had the best access to collect anecdotes of him.

"His skull," says this authority, "which was of an oblong and rather unusual shape, was said to be of such strength, that he could strike it with ease through the panel of a door, or the end of a barrel. His laugh is said to have been quite horrible; and his screech-owl voice, shrill, uncouth, and dissonant, corresponded well with his other peculiarities.

"There was nothing very uncommon about his dress. He usually wore an old slouched hat when he went abroad; and when at home, a sort of cowl or night-cap. He never wore shoes, being unable to adapt them to his mis-shapen finlike feet, but always had both feet and legs quite concealed, and wrapt up with pieces of cloth. He always walked with a sort of pole or pike-staff, considerably taller than himself. His habits were, in many respects, singular, and indicated a mind congenial to its uncouth tabernacle. A jealous, misanthropical, and irritable temper, was his prominent characteristic. The sense of his deformity haunted him like a phantom. And the insults and scorn to which this exposed him, had poisoned his heart with fierce and bitter feelings, which, from other points in his character, do not appear to have been more largely infused into his original temperament than that of his fellow-men.

"He detested children, on account of their propensity to insult and persecute him. To strangers he was generally reserved, crabbed, and surly; and though he by no means refused assistance or charity, he seldom either expressed or exhibited much gratitude. Even towards persons who had been his greatest benefactors, and who possessed the greatest share of his good-will, he frequently displayed much caprice and jealousy. A lady who had known him from his infancy, and who has furnished us in the most obliging manner with some particulars respecting him, says, that although Davie showed as much respect and attachment to her father's family, as it was in his nature to show to any, yet they were always obliged to be very cautious in their deportment towards him. One day, having gone to visit him with another lady, he took them through his garden, and was showing them, with much pride and good-humour, all his rich and tastefully assorted borders, when they happened to stop near a plot of cabbages which had been somewhat injured by the caterpillars. Davie, observing one of the ladies smile, instantly assumed his savage, scowling aspect, rushed among the cabbages, and dashed them to pieces with his KENT, exclaiming, 'I hate the worms, for they mock me!'

"Another lady, likewise a friend and old acquaintance of his, very unintentionally gave David mortal offence on a similar occasion. Throwing back his jealous glance as he was ushering her into his garden, he fancied he observed her spit, and exclaimed, with great ferocity, 'Am I a toad, woman! that ye spit at me--that ye spit at me?' and without listening to any answer or excuse, drove her out of his garden with imprecations and insult. When irritated by persons for whom he entertained little respect, his misanthropy displayed itself in words, and sometimes in actions, of still greater rudeness; and he used on such occasions

the most unusual and singularly savage imprecations and threats." [SCOTS MAGAZINE, vol. lxxx. p.207.]

Nature maintains a certain balance of good and evil in all her works; and there is no state perhaps so utterly desolate, which does not possess some source of gratification peculiar to itself, This poor man, whose misanthropy was founded in a sense on his own preternatural deformity, had yet his own particular enjoyments. Driven into solitude, he became an admirer of the beauties of nature. His garden, which he sedulously cultivated, and from a piece of wild moorland made a very productive spot, was his pride and his delight; but he was also an admirer of more natural beauty: the soft sweep of the green hill, the bubbling of a clear fountain, or the complexities of a wild thicket, were scenes on which he often gazed for hours, and, as he said, with inexpressible delight. It was perhaps for this reason that he was fond of Shenstone's pastorals, and some parts of PARADISE LOST. The author has heard his most unmusical voice repeat the celebrated description of Paradise, which he seemed fully to appreciate. His other studies were of a different cast, chiefly polemical. He never went to the parish church, and was therefore suspected of entertaining heterodox opinions, though his objection was probably to the concourse of spectators, to whom he must have exposed his unseemly deformity. He spoke of a future state with intense feeling, and even with tears. He expressed disgust at the idea, of his remains being mixed with the common rubbish, as he called it, of the churchyard, and selected with his usual taste a beautiful and wild spot in the glen where he had his hermitage, in which to take his last repose. He changed his mind, however, and was finally interred in the common burial-ground of Manor parish.

The author has invested Wise Elshie with some qualities which made him appear, in the eyes of the vulgar, a man possessed of supernatural power. Common fame paid David Ritchie a similar compliment, for some of the poor and ignorant, as well as all the children, in the neighbourhood, held him to be what is called uncanny. He himself did not altogether discourage the idea; it enlarged his very limited circle of power, and in so far gratified his conceit; and it soothed his misanthropy, by increasing his means of giving terror or pain. But even in a rude Scottish glen thirty years back, the fear of sorcery was very much out of date.

David Ritchie affected to frequent solitary scenes, especially such as were supposed to be haunted, and valued himself upon his courage in doing so. To be sure he had little chance of meeting anything more ugly than himself. At heart, he was superstitious, and planted many rowans (mountain ashes) around his hut, as a certain defence against necromancy. For the same reason, doubtless, he desired to have rowan-trees set above his grave.

We have stated that David Ritchie loved objects of natural beauty. His only living favourites were a dog and a cat, to which he was particularly attached, and his bees, which he treated with great care. He took a sister, latterly, to live in a hut adjacent to his own, but he did not permit her to enter it. She was weak in intellect, but not deformed in person; simple, or rather silly, but not, like her brother, sullen or bizarre. David was never affectionate to her; it was not in his nature; but he endured her. He maintained himself and her by the sale of the product of their garden and bee-hives; and, latterly, they had a small allowance

from the parish. Indeed, in the simple and patriarchal state in which the country then was, persons in the situation of David and his sister were sure to be supported. They had only to apply to the next gentleman or respectable farmer, and were sure to find them equally ready and willing to supply their very moderate wants. David often received gratuities from strangers, which he never asked, never refused, and never seemed to consider as an obligation. He had a right, indeed, to regard himself as one of Nature's paupers, to whom she gave a title to be maintained by his kind, even by that deformity which closed against him all ordinary ways of supporting himself by his own labour. Besides, a bag was suspended in the mill for David Ritchie's benefit; and those who were carrying home a melder of meal, seldom failed to add a GOWPEN [Handful] to the alms-bag of the deformed cripple. In short, David had no occasion for money, save to purchase snuff, his only luxury, in which he indulged himself liberally. When he died, in the beginning of the present century, he was found to have hoarded about twenty pounds, a habit very consistent with his disposition; for wealth is power, and power was what David Ritchie desired to possess, as a compensation for his exclusion from human society.

His sister survived till the publication of the tale to which this brief notice forms the introduction; and the author is sorry to learn that a sort of "local sympathy," and the curiosity then expressed concerning the Author of WEVERLEY and the subjects of his Novels, exposed the poor woman to enquiries which gave her pain. When pressed about her brother's peculiarities, she asked, in her turn, why they would not permit the dead to rest? To others, who pressed for some account of her parents, she answered in the same tone of feeling.

The author saw this poor, and, it may be said, unhappy man, in autumn 1797 being then, as he has the happiness still to remain, connected by ties of intimate friendship with the family of the venerable Dr. Adam Fergusson, the philosopher and historian, who then resided at the mansion-house of Halyards, in the vale of Manor, about a mile from Ritchie's hermitage, the author was upon a visit at Halyards, which lasted for several days, and was made acquainted with this singular anchorite, whom Dr. Fergusson considered as an extraordinary character, and whom he assisted in various ways, particularly by the occasional loan of books. Though the taste of the philosopher and the poor peasant did not, it may be supposed, always correspond, [I remember David was particularly anxious to see a book, which he called, I think, LETTERS TO ELECT LADIES, and which, he said, was the best composition he had ever read; but Dr. Fergusson's library did not supply the volume.] Dr. Fergusson considered him as a man of a powerful capacity and original ideas, but whose mind was thrown off its just bias by a predominant degree of self-love and self-opinion, galled by the sense of ridicule and contempt, and avenging itself upon society, in idea at least, by a gloomy misanthropy.

David Ritchie, besides the utter obscurity of his life while in existence, had been dead for many years, when it occurred to the author that such a character might be made a powerful agent in fictitious narrative. He, accordingly, sketched that of Elshie of the Mucklestane-Moor. The story was intended to be longer, and the catastrophe more artificially brought out; but a friendly critic, to whose opinion I

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

