

Chapter 1

TELLS OF A RUGBY THREE-QUARTER

Mr Dickson McCunn laid down the newspaper, took his spectacles from his nose, and polished them with a blue-and-white spotted handkerchief.

"It will be a great match," he observed to his wife. "I wish I was there to see. These Kangaroos must be a fearsome lot." Then he smiled reflectively. "Our laddies are not turning out so bad, Mamma. Here's Jaikie, and him not yet twenty, and he has his name blazing in the papers as if he was a Cabinet Minister."

Mrs McCunn, a placid lady of a comfortable figure, knitted steadily. She did not share her husband's enthusiasms.

"I know fine," she said, "that Jaikie will be coming back with a bandaged head and his arm in a sling. Rugby in my opinion is not a game for Christians. It's fair savagery."

"Hoots, toots! It's a grand ploy for young folk. You must pay a price for fame, you know. Besides, Jaikie hasn't got hurt this long time back. He's learning caution as he grows older, or maybe he's getting better at the job. You mind when he was at the school we used to have the doctor to him every second Saturday night... . He was always a terrible bold laddie, and when he was getting dangerous his eyes used to run with tears. He's quit of that habit now, but they tell me that when he's real excited he turns as white as paper. Well, well! we've all got our queer ways. Here's a biography of him and the other players. What's this it says?"

Mr McCunn resumed his spectacles.

"Here it is. 'J. Galt, born in Glasgow. Educated at the Western Academy and St Mark's College, Cambridge ... played last year against Oxford in the victorious Cambridge fifteen, when he scored three tries... . This is his first International ... equally distinguished in defence and attack... . Perhaps the most unpredictable of wing three-quarters now playing... .' Oh, and here's another bit in 'Gossip about the Teams.'" He removed his spectacles and laughed heartily. "That's good. It calls him a

'scholar and a gentleman.' That's what they always say about University players. Well, I'll warrant he's as good a gentleman as any, though he comes out of a back street in the Gorbals. I'm not so sure about the scholar. But he can always do anything he sets his mind to, and he's a worse glutton for books than me. No man can tell what may happen to Jaikie yet... . We can take credit for these laddies of ours, for they're all in the way of doing well for themselves, but there's just the two of them that I feel are like our own bairns. Just Jaikie and Dougal—and goodness knows what will be the end of that red-headed Dougal. Jaikie's a douce body, but there's a determined daftness about Dougal. I wish he wasn't so taken up with his misguided politics."

"I hope they'll not miss their train," said the lady. "Supper's at eight, and they should be here by seven-thirty, unless Jaikie's in the hospital."

"No fear," was the cheerful answer. "More likely some of the Kangaroos will be there. We should get a telegram about the match by six o'clock."

So after tea, while his wife departed on some domestic task, Mr McCunn took his ease with a pipe in a wicker chair on the little terrace which looked seaward. He had found the hermitage for which he had long sought, and was well content with it. The six years which had passed since he forsook the city of Glasgow and became a countryman had done little to alter his appearance. The hair had indeed gone completely from the top of his head, and what was left was greying, but there were few lines on his smooth, ruddy face, and the pale eyes had still the innocence and ardour of youth. His figure had improved, for country exercise and a sparer diet had checked the movement towards rotundity. When not engaged in some active enterprise, it was his habit to wear a tailed coat and trousers of tweed, a garb which from his boyish recollection he thought proper for a country laird, but which to the ordinary observer suggested a bookmaker. Gradually, a little self-consciously, he had acquired what he considered to be the habits of the class. He walked in his garden with a spud; his capacious pockets contained a pruning knife and twine; he could talk quite learnedly of crops and stock, and, though he never shouldered a gun, of the prospects of game; and a fat spaniel was rarely absent from his heels.

The home he had chosen was on the spur of a Carrick moor, with the sea to the west, and to south and east a distant prospect of the blue Galloway hills. After much thought he had rejected the various country houses which were open to his purchase; he felt it necessary to erect his own sanctuary, conformable to his modest but peculiar tastes. A farm of

some five hundred acres had been bought, most of it pasture-fields fenced by dry-stone dykes, but with a considerable stretch of broom and heather, and one big plantation of larch. Much of this he let off, but he retained a hundred acres where he and his grieve could make disastrous essays in agriculture. The old farm-house had been a whitewashed edifice of eight rooms, with ample outbuildings, and this he had converted into a commodious dwelling, with half a dozen spare bedrooms, and a large chamber which was at once library, smoking-room, and business-room. I do not defend Mr McCunn's taste, for he had a memory stored with bad precedents. He hankered after little pepper-box turrets, which he thought the badge of ancientry, and in internal decoration he had an unhallowed longing for mahogany panelling, like a ship's saloon. Also he doted on his vast sweep of gravel. Yet he had on the whole made a pleasing thing of Blawearry (it was the name which had first taken his fancy), for he stuck to harled and whitewashed walls, and he had a passion for green turf, so that, beyond the odious gravel, the lawns swept to the meadows unbroken by formal flowerbeds. These lawns were his special hobby. "There's not a yard of turf about the place," he would say, "that's not as well kept as a putting-green."

The owner from his wicker chair looked over the said lawns to a rough pasture where his cows were at graze, and then beyond a patch of yellowing bracken to the tops of a fir plantation. After that the ground fell more steeply, so that the tree-tops were silhouetted against the distant blue of the sea. It was mid-October, but the air was as balmy as June, and only the earlier dusk told of the declining year. Mr McCunn was under strict domestic orders not to sit out of doors after sunset, but he had dropped asleep and the twilight was falling when he was roused by a maid with a telegram.

In his excitement he could not find his spectacles. He tore open the envelope and thrust the pink form into the maid's face. "Read it, lassie—read it," he cried, forgetting the decorum of the master of a household.

"Coming seven-thirty," the girl read primly. "Match won by single point." Mr McCunn upset his chair, and ran, whooping, in search of his wife.

The historian must return upon his tracks in order to tell of the great event thus baldly announced. That year the Antipodes had despatched to Britain such a constellation of Rugby stars that the hearts of the home enthusiasts became as water and their joints were loosened. For years

they had known and suffered from the quality of those tall young men from the South, whom the sun had toughened and tautened—their superb physique, their resourcefulness, their uncanny combination. Hitherto, while the fame of one or two players had reached these shores, the teams had been in the main a batch of dark horses, and there had been no exact knowledge to set a bar to hope. But now Australia had gathered herself together for a mighty effort, and had sent to the field a fifteen most of whose members were known only too well. She had collected her sons wherever they were to be found. Four had already played for British Universities; three had won a formidable repute in international matches in which their country of ultimate origin had entitled them to play. What club, county, or nation could resist so well equipped an enemy? And, as luck decided, it fell to Scotland, which had been having a series of disastrous seasons, to take the first shock.

That ancient land seemed for the moment to have forgotten her prowess. She could produce a strong, hard-working and effective pack, but her great three-quarter line had gone, and she had lost the scrum-half who the year before had been her chief support. Most of her fifteen were new to an international game, and had never played together. The danger lay in the enemy halves and three-quarters. The Kangaroos had two halves possessed of miraculous hands and a perfect knowledge of the game. They might be trusted to get the ball to their three-quarters, who were reputed the most formidable combination that ever played on turf. On the left wing was the mighty Charvill, an Oxford Blue and an English International; on the right Martineau, who had won fame on the cinder-track as well as on the football-field. The centres were two cunning brothers, Clauson by name, who played in a unison like Siamese twins. Against such a four Scotland could scrape up only a quartet of possibles, men of promise but not yet of performance. The hosts of Tuscany seemed strong out of all proportion to the puny defenders of Rome. And as the Scottish right-wing three-quarter, to frustrate the terrible Charvill, stood the tiny figure of J. Galt, Cambridge University, five foot six inches in height and slim as a wagtail.

To the crowd of sixty thousand and more that waited for the teams to enter the field there was vouchsafed one slender comfort. The weather, which at Blawearry was clear and sunny, was abominable in the Scottish midlands. It had rained all the preceding night, and it was hoped that the ground might be soft, inclining to mud—mud dear to the heart of our islanders but hateful to men accustomed to the firm soil of the South.

The game began in a light drizzle, and for Scotland it began disastrously. The first scrum was in the centre of the ground, and the ball came out to the Kangaroo scrum-half, who sent it to his stand-off. From him it went to Clauson, and then to Martineau, who ran round his opposing wing, dodged the Scottish full-back, and scored a try, which was converted. After five minutes the Kangaroos led by five points.

After that the Scottish forwards woke up, and there was a spell of stubborn defence. The Scottish full-back had a long shot at goal from a free kick, and missed, but for the rest most of the play was in the Scottish twenty-five. The Scottish pack strove their hardest, but they did no more than hold their opponents. Then once more came a quick heel out, which went to one of the Clausons, a smart cut-through, a try secured between the posts and easily converted. The score was now ten points to nil.

Depression settled upon the crowd as deep as the weather, which had stopped raining but had developed into a sour *haar*. Followed a period of constant kicking into touch, a dull game which the Kangaroos were supposed to eschew. Just before half-time there was a thin ray of comfort. The Scottish left-wing three-quarter, one Smail, a Borderer, intercepted a Kangaroo pass and reached the enemy twenty-five before he was brought down from behind by Martineau's marvellous sprinting. He had been within sight of success, and half-time came with a faint hope that there was still a chance of averting a runaway defeat.

The second half began with three points to Scotland, secured from a penalty kick. Also the Scottish forwards seemed to have got a new lease of life. They carried the game well into the enemy territory, dribbling irresistibly in their loose rushes, and hooking and heeling in the grand manner from the scrums. The white uniforms of the Kangaroos were now plentifully soiled, and the dark blue of the Scots made them look the less bedraggled side. All but J. Galt. His duty had been that of desperate defence conducted with a resolute ferocity, and he had suffered in it. His jersey was half torn off his back, and his shorts were in ribbons: he limped heavily, and his small face looked as if it had been ground into the mud of his native land. He felt dull and stupid, as if he had been slightly concussed. His gift had hitherto been for invisibility; his fame had been made as a will-o'-the-wisp; now he seemed to be cast for the part of that Arnold von Winkelreid who drew all the spears to his bosom.

The ball was now coming out to the Scottish halves, but they mishandled it. It seemed impossible to get their three-quarters going. The ball either went loose, or was intercepted, or the holder was promptly

tackled, and whenever there seemed a chance of a run there was always either a forward pass or a knock-on. At this period of the game the Scottish forwards were carrying everything on their shoulders, and their backs seemed hopeless. Any moment, too, might see the deadly echelon of the Kangaroo three-quarters ripple down the field.

And then came one of those sudden gifts of fortune which make Rugby an image of life. The ball came out from a heel in a scrum not far from the Kangaroo twenty-five, and went to the Kangaroo stand-off half. He dropped it, and, before he could recover, it was gathered by the Scottish stand-off. He sent it to Smail, who passed back to the Scottish left-centre, one Morrison, an Academical from Oxford who had hitherto been pretty much of a passenger. Morrison had the good luck to have a clear avenue before him, and he had a gift of pace. Dodging the Kangaroo full-back with a neat swerve, he scored in the corner of the goal-line amid a pandemonium of cheers. The try was miraculously converted, and the score stood at ten points to eight, with fifteen minutes to play.

Now began an epic struggle, not the least dramatic in the history of the game since a century ago the Rugby schoolboy William Webb Ellis first "took the ball in his arms and ran with it." The Kangaroos had no mind to let victory slip from their grasp, and, working like one man, they set themselves to assure it. For a little their magnificent three-quarter line seemed to have dropped out of the picture, but now most theatrically it returned to it. From a scrum in the Kangaroo half of the field, the ball went to their stand-off and from him to Martineau. At the moment the Scottish players were badly placed, for their three-quarters were standing wide in order to overlap the faster enemy line. It was a perfect occasion for one of Martineau's deadly runs. He was, however, well tackled by Morrison and passed back to his scrum-half, who kicked ahead towards the left wing to Charvill. The latter gathered the ball at top-speed, and went racing down the touch-line with nothing before him but the Scottish right-wing three-quarter. It seemed a certain score, and there fell on the spectators a sudden hush. That small figure, not hitherto renowned for pace, could never match the Australian's long, loping, deadly stride.

Had Jaikie had six more inches of height he would have failed. But a resolute small man who tackles low is the hardest defence to get round. Jaikie hurled himself at Charvill, and was handed off by a mighty palm. But he staggered back in the direction of his own goal, and there was just one fraction of a second for him to make another attempt. This time he

succeeded. Charvill's great figure seemed to dive forward on the top of his tiny assailant, and the ball rolled into touch. For a minute, while the heavens echoed with the shouting, Jaikie lay on the ground bruised and winded. Then he got up, shook himself, like a heroic, bedraggled sparrow, and hobbled back to his place.

There were still five minutes before the whistle, and these minutes were that electric testing time, when one side is intent to consolidate a victory and the other resolute to avert too crushing a defeat. Scotland had never hoped to win; she had already done far better than her expectations, and she gathered herself together for a mighty effort to hold what she had gained. Her hopes lay still in her forwards. Her backs had far surpassed their form, but they were now almost at their last gasp.

But in one of them there was a touch of that genius which can triumph over fatigue. Jaikie had never in his life played so gruelling a game. He was accustomed to being maltreated, but now he seemed to have been pounded and smothered and kicked and flung about till he doubted whether he had a single bone undamaged. His whole body was one huge ache. Only the brain under his thatch of hair was still working well... . The Kangaroo pack had gone down field with a mighty rush, and there was a scrum close to the Scottish twenty-five. The ball went out cleanly to one of the Clausons, but it was now very greasy, and the light was bad, and he missed his catch. More, he stumbled after it and fell, for he had had a punishing game. Jaikie on the wing suddenly saw his chance. He darted in and gathered the ball, dodging Clauson's weary tackle. There was no other man of his side at hand to take a pass, but there seemed just a slender chance for a cut-through. He himself of course would be downed by Charvill, but there was a fraction of a hope, if he could gain a dozen yards, that he might be able to pass to Smail, who was not so closely marked.

His first obstacle was the Kangaroo scrum-half, who had come across the field. To him he adroitly sold the dummy, and ran towards the right touch-line, since there was no sign of Smail. He had little hope of success, for it must be only a question of seconds before he was brought down. He did not hear the roar from the spectators as he appeared in the open, for he was thinking of Charvill waiting for his revenge, and he was conscious that his heart was behaving violently quite outside its proper place. But he was also conscious that in some mysterious way he had got a second wind, and that his body seemed a trifle less leaden.

He was now past the half-way line, a little distance ahead of one of the Clausons, with no colleague near him, and with Charvill racing to

intercept him. For one of Jaikie's inches there could be no hand-off, but he had learned in his extreme youth certain arts not commonly familiar to Rugby players. He was a most cunning dodger. To the yelling crowd he appeared to be aiming at a direct collision with the Kangaroo left-wing. But just as it looked as if a two-seater must meet a Rolls-Royce head-on at full speed, the two-seater swerved and Jaikie wriggled somehow below Charvill's arm. Then sixty thousand people stood on their seats, waving caps and umbrellas and shouting like lunatics, for Charvill was prone on the ground, and Jaikie was stolidly cantering on.

He was now at the twenty-five line, and the Kangaroo full-back awaited him. This was a small man, very little taller than Jaikie, but immensely broad and solid, and a superlative place-kick. A different physique would have easily stopped the runner, now at the very limits of his strength, but the Kangaroo was too slow in his tackle to meet Jaikie's swerve. He retained indeed in his massive fist a considerable part of Jaikie's jersey, but the half-naked wearer managed to stumble on just ahead of him, and secured a try in the extreme corner. There he lay with his nose in the mud, utterly breathless, but obscurely happy. He was still dazed and panting when a minute later the whistle blew, and a noise like the Last Trump told him that by a single point he had won the match for his country.

There was a long table below the Grand Stand, a table reserved for the Press. On it might have been observed a wild figure with red hair dancing a war dance of triumph. Presently the table collapsed under him, and the rending of timber and the recriminations of journalists were added to the apocalyptic din.

At eight o'clock sharp a party of four sat down to supper at Blawearry. The McCunns did not dine in the evening, for Dickson declared that dinner was a stiff, unfriendly repast, associated in his mind with the genteel in cities. He clung to the fashions of his youth—ate a large meal at one o'clock, and a heavy tea about half-past four, and had supper at eight from October to May, and in the long summer days whenever he chose to come indoors. Mrs McCunn had grumbled at first, having dim social aspirations, but it was useless to resist her husband's stout conservatism. For the evening meal she was in the habit of arraying herself in black silk and many ornaments, and Dickson on occasions of ceremony was persuaded to put on a dinner jacket; but to-night he had declined to change, on the ground that the guests were only Dougal and Jaikie.

There were candles on the table in the pleasant dining-room, and one large lamp on the sideboard. Dickson had been stubborn about electric light, holding that a faint odour of paraffin was part of the amenities of a country house. A bright fire crackled on the hearth, for the October evenings at Blawearry were chilly.

The host was in the best of humours. "Here's the kind of food for hungry folk. Ham and eggs—and a bit of the salmon I caught yesterday! Did you hear that I fell in, and Adam had to gaff me before he gaffed the fish? Everything except the loaf is our own providing—the eggs are our hens', the ham's my own rearing and curing, the salmon is my catching, and the scones are Mamma's baking. There's a bottle of champagne to drink Jaikie's health. Man, Jaikie, it's an extraordinary thing you've taken so little hurt. We were expecting to see you a complete lameter, with your head in bandages."

Jaikie laughed. "I was in more danger from the crowd at the end than from the Kangaroos. It's Dougal that's lame. He fell through the reporters' table."

He spoke with the slight sing-song which is ineradicable in one born in the west of Scotland, but otherwise he spoke pure English, for he had an imitative ear and unconsciously acquired the speech of a new environment. One did not think of Jaikie as short, but as slight, for he was admirably proportioned and balanced. His hair was soft and light and unruly, and the small wedge of face beneath the thatch had an air of curious refinement and delicacy, almost of wistfulness. This was partly due to a neat pointed chin and a cherubic mouth, but chiefly to large grey eyes which were as appealing as a spaniel's. He was the incarnation of gentleness, with a hint of pathos, so that old ladies longed to mother him, and fools occasionally despised him—to their undoing. He had the look of one continually surprised at life, and a little lost in it. To-night his face from much contact with mother earth had something of the blue, battered appearance of a pugilist's, so that he seemed to be a cherub, but a damaged cherub, who had been violently ejected from his celestial home.

The fourth at the table, Dougal Crombie, made a strong contrast to Jaikie's elegance. The aforesaid chieftain of the Gorbals Die-hards had grown into a powerful young man, about five feet ten inches in height, with massive shoulders and a fist like a blacksmith's. Adolescence had revised the disproportions of boyhood. His head no longer appeared to be too big for his body; it was massive, not monstrous. The fiery red of his hair had toned down to a deeper shade. The art of the dentist had

repaired the irregularities of his teeth. His features were rugged but not unpleasing. But the eyes remained the same, grey-green, deep-set, sullen, smouldering with a fierce vitality. To a stranger there was something about him which held the fancy, as if a door had been opened into the past. Even so must have looked some Pictish warrior, who brewed heather-ale, and was beaten back from Hadrian's Wall; even so some Highland cateran who fired the barns of the Lennox; even so many a saturnine judge of Session and heavy-handed Border laird. Dougal in appearance was what our grandfathers called a "Gothic survival." His manner to the world was apt to be assertive and cynical; he seemed to be everlastingly in a hurry, and apt to jostle others off the footpath. It was unpleasant, many found, to argue with him, for his eye expressed a surly contempt; but they were wrong—it was only interest. Dougal was absorbed in life, and since his absorption was fiercer than other people's, it was misunderstood. Therefore he had few friends; but to those few—the McCunns, Jaikie, and perhaps two others—he was attached with a dog-like fidelity. With them he was at his ease and no longer *farouche*; he talked less, and would smile happily to himself, as if their presence made him content. They gave him the only home life he had ever known.

Mr McCunn spoke of those who had years before acknowledged Dougal's sway.

"You'll want to have the last news," he said. "Bill's getting on grand in Australia. He's on his own wee farm in what they call a group settlement, and his last letter says that he's gotten all the roots grubbed up and is starting his first ploughing, and that he's doing fine with his hens and his dairy cows. That's the kind of job for Bill—there was always more muscle than brains in him, but there's a heap of common sense... . Napoleon's in a bank in Montreal—went there from the London office last July. He'll rise in the world no doubt, for he has a great head for figures. Peter Paterson is just coming out for a doctor, and he has lifted a tremendous bursary—I don't mind the name of it, but it will see him through his last year in the hospitals. Who would have said that Peter would turn out scientific, and him such a through-other laddie? ... But Thomas Yownie is the big surprise. Thomas, you mind, was all for being a pirate. Well, he'll soon be a minister. He had aye a grand voice, and they tell me his sermons would wile the birds from the trees... . That's the lot, except for you and Jaikie. Man, as Chief Die-hard, I'm proud of my command."

Dickson beamed on them affectionately, and they listened with a show of interest, but they did not share his paternal pride. Youth at twenty is full of hard patches. Already to the two young men the world of six years ago and its denizens had become hazy. They were remotely interested in the fates of their old comrades, but no more. The day would come when they would dwell sentimentally on the past: now they thought chiefly of the present, of the future, and of themselves.

"And how are you getting on yourself, Dougal?" Dickson asked. "We read your things in the paper, and we whiles read about you. I see you're running for Parliament."

"I'm running, but I won't get in. Not yet."

"Man, I wish you were on a better side. You've got into an ill nest. I was reading this very morning a speech by yon Tombs—he's one of your big men, isn't he?—blazing away about the sins of the boorjoysee. That's just Mamma and me."

"It's not you. And Tombs, anyway, is a trumpery body. I have no use for the intellectual on the make, for there's nothing in him but vanity. But see here, Mr McCunn. The common people of this land are coming to their own nowadays. I know what they need and I know what they're thinking, for I come out of them myself. They want interpreting and they want guiding. Is it not right that a man like me should take a hand in it?"

Dickson looked wise. "Yes, if you keep your head. But you know fine, Dougal, that those who set out to lead the mob are apt to end by following. You're in a kittle trade, my man. And how do you manage to reconcile your views with your profession? You've got a good job with the Craw papers. You'll be aspiring some day to edit one of them. But what does Mr Craw say to your politics?"

The speaker's eye had a twinkle in it, but Dougal's face, hitherto as urbane as its rugged features permitted, suddenly became grim.

"Craw!" he cried. "Yon's the worst fatted calf of them all. Yon's the old wife. There's no bigger humbug walking on God's earth to-day than Thomas Carlyle Craw. I take his wages, because I give good value for them. I can make up a paper with any man, and I've a knack of descriptive writing. But thank God! I've nothing to do with his shoddy politics. I put nothing of myself into his rotten papers. I keep that for the *Outward* every second Saturday."

"You do," said Dickson dryly. "I've been reading some queer things there. What ails you at what you call 'modern Scotland'? By your way of it we've sold our souls to the English and the Irish."

"So we have." Dougal had relapsed again into comparative meekness. It was as if he felt that what he had to say was not in keeping with a fire-lit room and a bountiful table. He had the air of being a repository of dark things which were not yet ready for the light.

"Anyway, Scotland did fine the day. It's time to drink Jaikie's health."

This ceremony over, Dickson remained with his glass uplifted.

"We'll drink to your good health, Dougal, and pray Heaven, as the Bible says, to keep your feet from falling. It would be a sad day for your friends if you were to end in jyle... . And now I want to hear what you two are proposing to do with yourselves. You say you have a week's holiday, and it's a fortnight before Jaikie goes back to Cambridge."

"We're going into the Canonry," said Jaikie.

"Well, it's a fine countryside, the Canonry. Many a grand day I've had on its hill burns. But it's too late for the fishing... . I see from the papers that there's a by-election on now. Is Dougal going to sow tares by the roadside?"

"He would like to," said Jaikie, "but he won't be allowed. We'll keep to the hills, and our headquarters will be the Back House of the Garroch. It's an old haunt of ours."

"Fine I know it. Many a time when I've been fishing Loch Garroch I've gone in there for my tea. What's the wife's name now? Catterick? Aye, it was Catterick, and her man came from Sanquhar way. We'll get out a map after supper and you'll show me your road. The next best thing to tramping the hills yourself is to plan out another man's travels. There's grand hills round the Garroch—the Muneraw and the Yirnie and the Calmarton and the Caldron... . Stop a minute. Doesn't Mr Craw bide somewhere in the Canonry? Are you going to give him a call in, Dougal?"

"That's a long way down Glen Callowa," said Jaikie. "We mean to keep to the high tops. If the weather holds, there's nothing to beat a Canonry October."

"You're a pair of desperate characters," said Dickson jocosely. "You're going to a place which is thrang with a by-election, and for ordinary you'll not keep Dougal away from politics any more than a tyke from an ash-bucket. But you say you're not heeding the election. It's the high hills for you—but it's past the time for fishing, and young legs like yours will cover every top in a couple of days. I wish you mayna get into mischief. I'm afraid of Dougal with his daftness. He'll be for starting a new Jacobite rebellion. 'Kenmure's on and awa', Willie."

Mr McCunn whistled a stave of the song. His spirits were soaring.

"Well, I'll be at hand to bail you out... . And remember that I'm old, but not dead-old. If you set up the Standard on Garroch side, send me word and I'll on with my boots and join you."

Chapter 2

INTRODUCES A GREAT MAN IN ADVERSITY

Fifty-eight years before the date of this tale a child was born in the school-house of the landward parish of Kilmaclavers in the Kingdom of Fife. The schoolmaster was one Campbell Craw, who at the age of forty-five had espoused the widow of the provost of the adjacent seaport of Partankirk, a lady his junior by a single summer. Mr Craw was a Scots dominie of the old style, capable of sending boys direct to the middle class of Humanity at St Andrews, one who esteemed his profession, and wore in the presence of his fellows an almost episcopal dignity. He was recognised in the parish and far beyond it as a "deep student," and, when questions of debate were referred to his arbitrament, he would give his verdict with a weight of polysyllables which at once awed and convinced his hearers. The natural suspicion which might have attached to such profundity was countered by the fact that Mr Craw was an elder of the Free Kirk and in politics a sound Gladstonian. His wife was a kindred spirit, but, in her, religion of a kind took the place of philosophy. She was a noted connoisseur of sermons, who would travel miles to hear some select preacher, and her voice had acquired something of the pulpit monotone. Her world was the Church, in which she hoped that her solitary child would some day be a polished pillar.

The infant was baptised by the name of Thomas Carlyle, after the sage whom his father chiefly venerated; Mrs Craw had graciously resigned her own preference, which was Robert Rainy, after the leader of her communion. Never was a son the object of higher expectations or more deeply pondered plans. He had come to them unexpectedly; the late Provost of Partankirk had left no offspring; he was at once the child of their old age, and the sole hope of their house. Both parents agreed that he must be a minister, and he spent his early years in an atmosphere of dedication. Some day he would be a great man, and the episodes of his youth must be such as would impress the readers of his ultimate biography. Every letter he wrote was treasured by a fond mother. Each New

Year's Day his father presented him with a lengthy epistle, in the style of an evangelical Lord Chesterfield, which put on record the schoolmaster's more recent reflections on life: a copy was carefully filed for the future biographer. His studies were minutely regulated. At five, though he was still shaky in English grammar, he had mastered the Greek alphabet. At eight he had begun Hebrew. At nine he had read *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, and most of Mr Robert Pollok's *Course of Time*. At eleven he had himself, to his parents' delight, begun the first canto of an epic on the subject of Eternity.

It was the way to produce a complete prig, but somehow Thomas Carlyle was not the ordinary prig. For one thing, he was clearly not born for high scholastic attainments. There was a chronic inaccuracy in him which vexed his father's soul. He was made to dabble in many branches of learning, but he seemed incapable of exact proficiency in any. When he had finished with the school of Kilmaclavers, he attended for two years the famous academy of Partankirk, which had many times won the first place in the college bursaries. But he was never head boy, or near it, and the bursary which he ultimately won (at Edinburgh) was only a small one, fitted to his place of twenty-seventh in the list. But he was noted for his mental activity. He read everything he could lay his hand on, and remembered a good deal of it. He was highly susceptible to new ideas, which he frequently misunderstood. At first he was unpopular among his contemporaries, because of his incapacity for any game and his disinclination to use his fists, but in each circle he entered he won his way eventually to tolerance if not to popularity. For he was fruitful of notions; he could tell his illiterate comrades wonderful things which he had picked up from his voracious reading; he could suggest magnificent schemes, though in carrying them out he was at the best a camp-follower.

At the age of twenty we find Thomas Carlyle Craw in the last year of his Edinburgh arts course, designing to migrate presently to a theological college. His career has not been distinguished, though he has won a fifth prize in the English Literature class and a medal for an essay on his namesake. But he has been active in undergraduate journalism, and has contributed many pieces to the evening papers. Also he has continued his miscellaneous reading, and is widely if inaccurately informed on every current topic. His chief regret is that he is a miserable public speaker, his few efforts having been attended by instant failure, and this is making him lukewarm about a ministerial career. His true weapon, he feels, is the pen, not the tongue. Otherwise he is happy, for he is never

bored—and pleasantly discontented, for he is devouringly ambitious. In two things his upbringing has left an abiding mark. The aura of dedication hangs over him; he regards himself as predestined to be a great man, though he is still doubtful about the kind of greatness to be attained. Also father and mother have combined to give him a serious view of life. He does not belie his name, for the sage of Ecclefechan has bequeathed him some rags of his mantle. He must always be generalising, seeking for principles, philosophising; he loves a formula rather than a fact: he is heavily weighted with unction; rhetoric is in every fibre. He has a mission to teach the world, and, as he walks the pavements, his head is full of profound aphorisms or moving perorations—not the least being the obituary which some day men will write of him. One phrase in it will be, "He was the Moses who led the people across the desert to the Promised Land"; but what the Promised Land was to be like he would have been puzzled to say.

That winter he suffered his first calamity. For Campbell Crow fell ill of pneumonia and died, and a month later Euphemia, his wife, followed him to Kilmaclavers churchyard. Thomas Carlyle was left alone in the world, for his nearest relative was a cousin in Manitoba whom he had never seen. He was an affectionate soul and mourned his parents sincerely; when his grief dulled a little he wrote a short biography of them, "A Father and a Mother in Israel," which appeared in the *Partankirk Advertiser* and was justly admired. He was left now to his own resources, to shape his life without the tender admonitions of the school-house. Long and solemnly he perpended the question of the ministry. It had been his parents' choice for him, he had been "dedicated" to it, he could not lightly forsake it. But his manifest lack of preaching endowments—he had a weak, high-pitched voice and an extreme nervousness—convinced him that common sense must prevail over filial piety. He discussed the matter with the Minister of Kilmaclavers, who approved. "There's more ways of preaching than in a pulpit," was that sage's verdict.

So Thomas decided upon letters. His parents had bequeathed him nearly three thousand pounds, he had no debts, he was accustomed to live sparingly; on such a foundation it seemed to him that he could safely build the first storey of what should one day be a towering edifice. After taking an undistinguished degree, he migrated to London, according to the secular fashion of ambitious Scottish youth.

His first enterprises were failures. The serious monthlies would have none of his portentous treatises on the conduct of life, and *The Times* brusquely refused a set of articles on current politics, in the writing of

which he had almost wept at his own eloquence. But he found a niche in a popular religious weekly, where, under the signature of "Simon the Tanner," he commented upon books and movements and personalities.

Soon that niche became a roomy pulpit, from which every week he fulminated, argued, and sentimentalised with immense acceptance. His columns became the most popular feature of that popular journal. He knew nothing accurately about any subject in the world, but he could clothe his ignorance in pontifical vestments and give his confusion the accents of authority. He had a remarkable flair for discerning and elaborating the tiny quantum of popular knowledge on any matter. Above all, he was interesting and aggressively practical. He took the hand of the half-educated and made them believe that he was leading them to the inner courts of wisdom. Every flicker of public emotion was fanned by him into a respectable little flame. He could be fiercely sarcastic in the manner of his namesake, he could wallow in the last banalities of sentiment, he could even be jocose and kittenish, but he knew his audience and never for a moment lost touch with it. "Helpful" was the epithet most commonly applied to him. He was there to encourage and assist, and his answers to correspondents began to fill a large space in his chosen journal.

So at the age of twenty-four Thomas was making a good income, and was beginning to be much in request by uplift societies. He resolutely refused to appear in public: he was too wise to let his halting utterance weaken the impression of his facile pen. But a noble discontent was his, and he marshalled his forces for another advance. Generations on his mother's side of small traders in Partankirk had given him considerable business acumen, and he realised that the way to fortune did not lie in writing for other men. He must own the paper which had its vogue from his talents, and draw to himself the whole profits of exploiting the public taste. Looking about him, he decided that there was room for a weekly journal at a popular price, which would make its appeal to the huge class of the aspiring half-baked, then being turned out by free education. They were not ardent politicians; they were not scholars; they were homely, simple folk, who wanted a little politics, a little science, a little religion, set to a domestic tune. So he broke with his employers, and, greatly daring, started his own penny weekly. He had considerably added to his little fortune, for he had no extravagant tastes, and he had made many friends in the circles of prosperous nonconformity. There was a spice of the gambler in Thomas, for every penny he possessed or could borrow he put into the new venture.

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