

JOHN MORRISON,  
*POET, MUSICIAN, AND TRAVELLING SHOWMAN,*  
BY  
DONALD J. JOLLY.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—EARLY LOVE FOR TRAVELLING SHOWMEN—RUNS AWAY FROM HOME—JOINS A TRAVELLING THEATRE, WIZARD OF THE NORTH, MANAGER—BECOMES A MEMBER OF MR ORD'S EQUESTRIAN TROUPE.



LAYERS, singers, musicians, and poets have of late flooded the world with their recollections and reminiscences; and it has become the fashion to cast modesty aside, to don the mantle of audacious self-assertion, and to speak in the first personal pronoun—I. I will follow the prevailing fashion—and there is good authority for this—as I only in doing so follow the example set before me by the giants of literature. Of the philosophers who have favoured us with their autobiography, we have Hume, Voltaire, and Gibbon; among mystic charlatans, Paracelsus, Liley, and Doctor Dee; among poets, Byron, Gilfillan, and Hogg; and among showmen, a perfect host, with the Prince of Humbugs, Barnum, at their head.

In this introductory chapter, I may tell you that I intend to follow the lead of probably the greatest autobiography ever written. This being so, I cannot do better than introduce myself and my intentions to you in words from that famous narrative—"I know my heart, and have studied mankind; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps with no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether nature did wisely in breaking the mould with which she formed me, can only be determined after having read this work. Whenever the last trumpet shall sound I will present myself before the Sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I. With equal freedom and veracity have I related what was laudable or wicked—I have concealed no crimes, added no virtues; and if I have sometimes in-

roduced superfluous ornament, it was merely to occupy a void occasioned by defective memory. I may have supposed that certain which I only knew to be probable, but have never inserted as truth a conscious falsehood. Such as I was, I have declared myself; sometimes vile and despicable, at others virtuous, generous, and sublime; even as Thou hast read my inmost soul: Power eternal! Assemble around Thy throne the innumerable throng of my fellow-mortals; let them listen to my confessions, let me blush at my depravity, let them tremble at my sufferings; let each in his turn expose with equal sincerity his failings, the wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver *I was better than that man.*"

I was born on the 7th day of April in the year 1819. My father and mother, although not wealthy, occupied a position in society in which they were respectable and respected. The place of my birth shall be nameless, as I have still living two nephews—the sons of an only sister—who might not care that it should be known that their uncle is an itinerant showman. One of these nephews is a minister in Perthshire, and the other a doctor in the same county. I have also a nephew, the son of a brother, also a member of one of the learned professions in Stirlingshire.

The education I received in my youth would probably have fitted me for a higher vocation in life than that of a showman; but as Shakespeare says—

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will."

Possibly the planet Mercury had been in the second house of the horoscope of my nativity when I was born.

By the time I was able to walk, nothing gave me greater pleasure than the arrival in the town of my birth of shows of any and every description. Tumblers, horsemanship, menageries, theatres, "shogging" boats, street singers, dying speech proclaimers, organ-grinders, and the whole fraternity of these wandering Bohemians never failed to delight my young heart. The glittering tinsel of the graceful dancer, the bellowing roar of the melo-dramatic hero, the feats of the equestrian, all appeared to my young eyes and my untutored mind like visions of Mahomet's heaven. Such being my natural proclivities, it was not to be wondered at that when my father, who had in his mind, decent man, to make me a quiet, douce, sober citizen like himself, wanted to apprentice me to an industrious

calling whereby I might earn my bread, I made up my mind to run away, and soon after joined a travelling theatrical company.

My first master was a man named "Big Scott," who was proprietor of a travelling theatre, but a very indifferent actor. The great Wizard of the North—John Henry Anderson—who at this time had little idea of the greatness that was in store for him—was manager of this small booth of strolling players. Of course I have seen Anderson often since, after he became the mighty conjuror; but I did not think him such a great man at the height of his fame and popularity as when I looked up to him while a boy in the theatre where he took the leading characters and played "Rob Roy," "Richard III.," &c., &c., when by his dramatic action and force he split the ears of the groundlings. So much does our youthful conception of what is excellent in acting remain with us in after years that, although I have heard in later days Southern, Barry Sullivan, and Henry Irving, I still look back fondly to the impersonations which first kindled my youthful enthusiasm, and to me will ever remain the impression that John Henry Anderson was the beau-ideal of an actor. Of course I know this is all wrong, but I am simply giving my impressions, and so I record them. The fresh young mind is uncritical, and easily pleased; the young heart throbs with delight and pleasure at whatever pleases the youthful imagination; but when we come to riper years our feelings are blunted, and we become critical and exacting

After I left this travelling company, which I did in the north of England, I engaged myself to Mr Ord, the great bare-back equestrian. The great Ord was always a favourite with the people in Scotland, and I believe there are few men or women in our country but have pleasing recollections of the delight they experienced in their boyhood or girlhood when they witnessed old Mr Ord's open-air exhibitions on the Market Muir? As I have a good deal to say both about Mr Ord and his company, I will reserve the details thereof for my next chapter.

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## CHAPTER II.

ENGAGES WITH MR. ORD—COMPARISON BETWEEN MR. ORD AND DUCROW—ORD'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE—HIS SUCCESS IN SCOTLAND—BUILDS A CIRCUS IN INVERNESS—RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMPANY—OLD DRINKING CUSTOMS—PROCESSION ON OPENING NIGHT.

When I was first engaged with Mr. Ord, he was in very poor circumstances indeed. It was, as I stated in the first chapter, in the north of England. The great Ducrow was then at the zenith of his popularity, and although, in my opinion, Mr. Ord was his equal, if not his superior, as an equestrian, he somehow never took the taste of an English audience, nor was he ever received anywhere by the English people with that enthusiasm and applause with which they always greeted the performances of Ducrow. As I have said, when I joined him his fortunes were at a very low ebb, but shortly after I became a member of his company, he crossed the Borders, and at once achieved an extraordinary success. His success was so great that he was able to cease travelling during the winter time, and built a circus and amphitheatre, and settled down in some of the large towns, where he was largely patronized by the working class as well as the leading gentry. He richly deserved the success he achieved, for few men have ever attained the same grace and agility in equestrian feats as old Mr. Ord. His own performance always was the chief attraction of the entertainment.

He did wonderful feats on the slack wire, such as playing the violin, on which he was a good performer. As a tumbler I have never seen his equal, and indeed few, if any, ever excelled him in any of the feats he undertook.

In person he was a very powerful man, about five feet ten inches in height, and when on horseback it required little stretch of the imagination to believe him to be a prototype of a Greek statue; his face was bold and manly, the nose and cheek-bones and chin large; his mouth firm, showing determination and spirit, and his brow, although not high, was broad, and the stern expression of his eyes told the beholder that he was haughty and austere; his temper was fiery and easily ruffled, but he was easily appeased, never implacable and unforgiving, and to the members of his company often acted as a good considerate father; but he was very exacting with his servants.

His ring-master, when I joined him, was a man called Dan Gunn,

who had for many years been a true and faithful servant to Mr Ord, whose duty in the ring was to keep the horses going, and a very hard taskmaster he was to the novices. I remember when I was training he took great pains with me, as I was very willing to learn; but I have seen him, with some, when they did not make a good attempt to do what they were told, in place of striking the horse, bring the whip down pretty smartly over the recalcitrant's shoulders.

Mr Ord spent nearly all his time in the ring with his horses—more time than ever I saw any man since, and I have been in many places. I may explain that the first circus Mr Ord had was built in Inverness, and after the amphitheatre had been completed and everything in working order there were three days' practice in that circus which I will ever remember. We were at it for eighteen hours out of four-and-twenty. At last the opening night came, and two hours before the time advertised for opening the doors to receive the public, we were all hastily summoned up to Mr Ord's lodgings, for what purpose none of us knew.

He read to us the rules and regulations of his new show, and then he told us that if we thought we could not obey them to speak out at once and he would pay us our wages and let us go, for if we stayed and committed any breach of his regulations the penalty would be instant dismissal, and that he would get us drummed out of the town in disgrace.

The rules were as follows:—(1) If any member of the company was seen under the influence of drink either in the circus or on the street by night or by day he or she would be discharged; (2) cleanliness of person and clothing was imperative, and if any one was in need of clothing, and had not the wherewithal to purchase it, he would advance the money and take payment by instalments; (3) every member of the company had to appear in the ring in a clean dress every night, under the penalty of the forfeiture of a night's wages; (4) drinking on a Sunday was strictly prohibited.

This leads me to remark in passing that there was no Forbes M'Kenzie Act in those days. Then you could get drink at any hour you liked, cheaper and better stuff than you can get now—the reason probably being that the half of it never saw the exciseman. Threepence or fourpence was the cost of a gill of the best, and then you had not far to go for it, for every toll-house on the road sold drink, and I am sure there were more than twice as many

public-houses and other quiet dramshops, if you were acquainted with their locality, then than now, but with all these facilities for getting drunk I must bear my testimony to the fact that there was not then so much drink consumed as there is now, and I am sure many other old men will be able to corroborate this statement.

After Mr Ord had read us all the rules and regulations, to which we gave our ready acquiescence, he ordered us off to our lodgings to get washed, and to come back as quickly as we possibly could, as he wanted us to go down to the circus in procession. When we had all assembled we took to the streets, headed by Mr Ord, Mr Delaney, Mr and Mrs Bolton or Wilkins (the son of this couple was bugler and teacher of music in the 1st Forfarshire Militia). After these followed the rest of the company as suited themselves. The news soon spread abroad that Ord and his men were coming, and the turn-out to see us walk down to open the new circus was immense.

I have often been in Inverness since with other circuses, but I have never seen an ovation such as was given Mr Ord on this occasion. The people wished him God-speed, hurrahed, waved their hats and caps with one accord, and many good wishes were expressed by spokesmen both in Gaelic and English. Mr Ord addressed the multitude and thanked them for their good wishes, and promised them such a performance that night as had never been witnessed before in their good town.

*(To be continued).*



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CHAPTER III.

OPENING OF THE NEW CIRCUS—MR. JOHN DELANEY'S FEATS—DONALD MACKINTOSH, THE WOULD-BE EQUESTRIAN—HIS REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION—MR. ORD THE HERO OF THE EVENING—TAM O'SHANTER AND HIS GREY MARE MEG—DELANEY AS "CUTTY SARK."

WITHIN half-an-hour after the doors were opened the circus was crowded in every part. The first seats were filled by the shopkeepers and gentry, the others by the well-to-do working people, and so great was the demand for the standing room that it was with much difficulty the ring-master could prevent them from overflowing into the performing area.

It was indeed a grand sight—a perfect forest of genial happy faces, and the circus itself looked beautiful, as everything was new and unsoiled. The glare of the paraffin lamps, the beautiful trappings of the horses, and the glistening spangles of the performers, made up a scene that appeared to my unsophisticated eyes like a glimpse of fairyland. The usual buffoonery between the ring-master and the clown opened the proceedings, and every joke that was "cracked" elicited rounds of laughter and applause.

The first equestrian performer for the evening was Mr. John Delaney, who went through a remarkable performance of mounting and dismounting his horse in every possible way without the use of stirrups.

After this performance Charles Walker, John Nicoll, Daniel Lindsay and myself, all did extraordinary feats in horsemanship, and though the saying so will perhaps be considered egotistical, still love for the truth compels me to affirm that a smarter set of men were never brought together in any circus. They were all very clever at their work, and I am not sure if the present generation of circus riders could display the same fearless daring, matchless

agility, and graceful deportment displayed by the company under Mr. Ord half-a-century ago in Inverness.

Mr. Ord's orders were—"You must not attempt to do; you *must* do."

After the whole company had executed their various feats a hubbub arose among the audience nearest the entrance, which caused all eyes to be turned in that direction.

A man, who appeared to be a shepherd newly from the hills, was making the best of his way across the barricade into the circle. He marched up to one of the horses that was standing in the ring, and Mr. Delaney having ceased performing when he saw the stranger coming over the barricade, demanded in a loud voice what he wanted there, when the man told him that his name was Donald Mackintosh, all the way from Tain, and that he wanted an engagement.

He was sternly told that there was no job for him, and the whole employees of the circus fastened on the luckless Donald to forcibly remove him, but he appealed to the ring-master, declaring that, if he only got a chance, he would jump on the back of the horse as he had seen others do.

The ring-master left the settlement of the matter to the audience, who with one accord decided that Donald should get a chance to show his powers. He managed to get on the back of the horse in a very clumsy way, but it appeared impossible for him to keep anything like a steady seat as the horse made its way round the circle.

At one time he could be seen with the neck of the horse clasped in both his arms, the next holding on by the mane, and again by the tail.

At last he managed somehow or other to scramble on his knees, and as the horse continued to increase its speed Donald got to his feet, and at last became quite steady.

After a few rounds of the circle had been traversed in this manner, to the great amazement of all, and amid cheering that was tremendous, the countryman cast off his homespun dress and was transformed into Scotland's famous cateran, "Rob Roy," in full highland costume.

The horse still continued at full gallop, and another change of dress transformed the rider into Scotland's darling hero, "Sir William Wallace."

The next change portrayed "Bruce of Bannockburn" brandish-



ing the fatal battle axe that killed Sir Henry de Bohun, and as an illustration of history the rider was seen looking with concern at the edge of the axe as if regretting having blunted it on the knight's skull. More than a dozen transformations took place, among which were "Rollo," the Peruvian hero, "Buy a Broom," and the "New-haven Fishwife," and all the characters were well delineated by the dumb show of the equestrian.

At length, after he had cast his last shell, the veritable Mr. Ord was recognised as the actor who had gone through this varied and interesting *dramatis personæ*, and as he stood erect with proud look and noble bearing on the bare back of the horse the audience realised at once that he was master of his profession, and the cheers, clapping of hands, and enthusiasm displayed by them must have pleased the stern old equestrian.

Mr. Ord gave another performance on the same evening—a feat in which I have never seen him equalled, viz., the ride upon the backs of eight horses. This feat was a great one indeed, but he was master of it, and never during the progress of the ride did he lose nerve or confidence. The whole eight horses ran side by side, his right foot being on the back of the outside, and his left foot on the back of the inside horse. He thus strode over the other six, while all the eight horses galloped at their utmost speed. This was considered to be the crowning feat of the evening, and when it was over the spectators' cheering was deafening, and you would have thought that the clapping of hands would have never ceased.

While I looked on the pleased and excited faces of the audience, and the extraordinary feats that Mr. Ord performed, I could not help thinking that the sympathy and admiration of an audience go a great way to inspire the performer and make him accomplish feats he would otherwise be incapable of performing.

I was also reminded on looking round the circus that night of some remarks made by Goethe, in "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," about the showfolk, when *Mignon* goes away with them.

Alluding to their performance, he says:—"they seemed to make all who saw them happy for one night, and that no one had altogether lived in vain who could still the fierce and conflicting emotions of the human breast and fill it with pleasure—although it was only for one night."

It would perhaps weary the reader to minutely describe everything that happened in the ring that night, but I may mention in

brief that Daniel the clown, who was well known at one time throughout Scotland as the "Brosy Merryman," afforded much amusement; that Mr. Delaney performed his famous ladder dance; that Mr. Ord's learned horse danced a measure to the tune of "The Campbells are Coming," and the whole performance concluded with the spectacular extravaganza of "Tam o' Shanter and his Grey Mare Meg," in which the whole of the company, both male and female, took part. Delaney's representation of "Cutty Sark" was unique, and probably has never been surpassed.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

MEETS WITH AN OLD COMPANION—RESOLVES TO LEAVE THE SHOWMAN LIFE—MEETS A RECRUITING SERGEANT—PARTS FROM MR. ORD—MEETS SIMON PROUDFOOT—ACCEPTS AN ENGAGEMENT—INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPANY—ENTERS ON HIS DUTIES.

The performance was over, the audience were fast leaving the circus, and the company were busy putting things in order for the night, when I heard a voice crying out my name, and turning to whence the voice proceeded, I perceived a young man whom I recognised as a youthful companion of my own.

This was the first person whom I had met from home since I commenced the life of a showman, and I was anxious to know what my father and mother were thinking about my absconding, and how all my old friends and acquaintances were doing. I quietly told this young man to wait for me a few minutes outside until my duties for the night should be accomplished. He did so, and when the lights were out and everything made snug, I took him home with me to my lodgings, where we had a long, and, to me, extremely interesting conversation. He urged me strongly to give up the wandering life, and make my way to Edinburgh, where my father and mother now resided. He said he was sure they would be only too happy to see me, and would do what was in their power to give me a start in life.

My friend urged me so strongly, and pleaded so hard, that I at last consented; but what was I to do with regard to my engagement with Mr. Ord? I knew he would be unwilling to part with me, for I was a very promising pupil, and likely to be of great use to him in the future; and I had been so well treated that it

appeared to me to be gross ingratitude to leave the kind old gentleman, when I knew he would have some trouble in filling my place.

I have often observed in my walk through life that the gravest problems that trouble us very often solve themselves. This was what happened on this occasion.

Next morning, on leaving my lodgings, whom should I encounter but a recruiting party marching through the streets. They had engaged a fifer, a drummer, and a clarionet player, and were beating up for the purpose of attracting young men to enlist. There were two lance-corporals and a sergeant, and smart, trim fellows they were. The sergeant had been, when a very young man, engaged at Waterloo. Having there distinguished himself for his coolness and bravery, he was shortly after made a non-commissioned officer. He had the fine, suave tongue of a successful recruiter; and was wonderfully fertile in his inventions as to the pleasure and glory of a soldier's life.

As I was then a strapping youth of some nineteen summers, well proportioned, and straight as a rush, I caught the eye of the recruiting sergeant looking towards me with the expression of a connoisseur. He accosted me in a cheery voice and invited me along to the rendezvous to have a talk. Nothing loth, I went along with the party and spent a few pleasant hours in their company, but all the fascinating descriptions of the joviality, glory, gallantry, and sprightliness of a soldier's life, failed in succeeding to entice me to enlist.

I well knew the picture to be what the Irish designate "blarney," and that the life of a soldier at the period of which I write (it is better now), was one of hardship, ignominy, and slavery.

Mr. Ord had got by some means to know that I was drinking with the recruiting party, for I got a very peremptory summons to wait upon him at his lodgings at once.

I made the best of my way there, when I was greeted with such a fearful burst of passion and wild denunciation from the lips of the old gentleman that I was perfectly terrified. He accused me of ingratitude in having resolved to leave him and become a soldier. I at once saw that this would be a good pretence for leaving, and I told him that I wanted to go at once.

At this the old gentleman softened a little, and said he would pay me what was due and let me go.

I sold my dresses to one of the company, and with some £2 10s. in my pocket took the road to travel from Inverness to Edinburgh. As I walked along the road to Nairn I was in very low spirits. The day was gloomy and lowering, snow fell at intervals, and the howling of the wind and the tempestuous aspect of the sky somehow appeared to produce a feeling of deplorable melancholy and sadness in my breast. Life appeared to me to have no roseate shadows; all was gloomy, dark, and desolate. I upbraided myself for leaving a comfortable and respectable home and becoming an outcast and a wanderer on the face of the earth. I regretted and saw in a light that had never presented itself to me before the agony I must have brought upon my old parents by my mysterious disappearance. I was in that frame of mind, and passing through that process of thought, which sometimes suddenly makes bad people good, careless people religious, and converts the careless, rollicking rogue into a serious, moral man.

I arrived at Nairn, and put up in the travellers' rest there, and after partaking of a hearty tea, relished by a "Glasgow Magistrate," eaten with some good oat bannocks well buttered, I felt myself a new man, and was beginning to laugh at my gloomy views of life. I met in this house one Simon Proudfoot, an old showman, who had a caravan of his own. His show consisted of a performing pony that did wonderful feats with cards, told who liked the girls, and when asked how lazy girls did in the morning would lay himself on his back, shut his eyes and grunt. He had also a performing monkey who, when dressed like a soldier with a small sword by his side and a miniature musket in his hand, did wonderful feats in musketry drill and broadsword exercise. He had also two performing dogs, the one a huge black Newfoundland, some twelve stone in weight, and the other an Italian greyhound, the prettiest lady-looking little dog ever I clapt eyes on. The fine expressive almond-shaped eyes which struck out prominently from her beautifully formed little head seemed to have in them human intelligence.

I have been thus particular in enumerating the company of performers in Simon's caravan, because I was destined to become intimately connected therewith. Simon himself was an old man some seventy-five years of age; tall, although the weight of years now bowed him down. He wore his scanty locks, which were as white as the driven snow, in long ringlets; his forehead was broad;

his eyes dark grey, and he had altogether a very pleasing, although stern expression of countenance.

Some thirty years before the time of which I write his wife had died leaving him with an only son, who, as he grew up, became his father's right hand, and assisted him in the show business; but about a month before I met Simon this son, then in the full vigour of his early manhood, was seized with a malignant fever and died.

The old man found himself unable for the laborious business of attending to his animals and driving his show from place to place. He had already had a few assistants, but he told me they all turned out untrustworthy, and at the present time he was on the out-look for a man.

While we sat smoking our pipes over a tankard of tenpenny ale I gave Simon a slight sketch of my antecedents. He offered me very liberal terms. "In fact, John," he said, "I am a bit of a physiognomist, and when first I clapt eyes on you I said to myself, here is a good-faced, determined, reliable, trustworthy fellow. Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you, John, should you agree to become my servant. When my boy died"—(as he said these words there was a sob in the noble old man's voice)—"all the kith and kin I had on God's creation died. Now, if you will prove yourself true and faithful to old Simon Proudfoot, when I go to my rest, which in the course of nature cannot be very long, I will make you heir to all my belongings, for since Jim"—(his son's name)—"departed, it has cost me many a sad thought—if I should die suddenly, too—about what would become of my poor dumb friends."

I felt strangely attracted to the kind old showman, and closed with his generous offer, thanking him truly from the bottom of my heart.

He took me along to his caravan, and introduced me to his dumb performers. "Madge Wildfire," his performing pony, came whimpering up when she saw him, licked his hands with her tongue, and pushed her nose into his capacious pockets in search of biscuits. "Boatswain," the Newfoundland, was also in ecstasies at the sight of his master, putting his immense paws on Simon's two shoulders and licking his face. "Beppo," the monkey, sat chattering in a corner, as if displeased at the presence of a stranger, whilst at his feet lay the timorous Italian greyhound "Blanche," eyeing me with a questioning look, as if asking whether I was a friend or a foe.

Old Simon informed me that, as the weather was getting very stormy and boisterous, and as he expected a very hard, rough winter, he intended, early on the morrow, to take the road south, probably fixing his quarters for the winter either in Dundee, Perth, or Glasgow.

After I had suppered up the waggon horse and seen, under the old man's direction, to the comfort of the company, we retired early to bed in the caravan to be up betimes on the morrow, as we intended making Fochabers our destination, a good day's journey from Nairn.

*(To be continued).*



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## CHAPTER V.

SIMON PROUDFOOT'S PHILOSOPHY—HIS THEORY OF THE FIVE INWARD FOES—THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS, AS SUNG BY BURNS—MEETS A GIPSY GIRL—FALLS IN LOVE—HER PROPHETIC SONG—GRANTS HIM ASSIGNATION.

THE intercourse I had, and the conversations I enjoyed while on the road with old Simon Proudfoot was perhaps the happiest period of my existence, and the lessons in philosophy, morals, and sociology that fell from his lips in these conversations taught me more than ever I had learned before or after.

Simon was a specimen of humanity rarely met with in this world. He had an organisation and a development which might have been envied by one of the great ones of this earth; but fortune, which has been aptly designated the blind goddess, had mapped out the way through life of this finely constituted man to be that of a humble showman. Perhaps it was better so.

I think it was Cincinnatus in his old age that exclaimed, "I have governed men and cultivated cabbages, and I found the latter occupation the more pleasing of the two." So about old Simon Proudfoot it might have been said, although he might have shone, had he had the opportunity, at the bar, in the camp, or in the senate, that he was happier and extracted more good from life in his peregrinations over hill and dale and by lake and stream with his show.

The long solitary journeys that he took gave him time for reflection, and formed an agreeable contrast to the hubbub and noise, and strife, and disturbance of the cities which he visited.

I have said that his conversation on men and things improved me much; I may, in fact, say that he was the father of my mind,

for he was the first man who set me thinking about the grave problems of life, death, and immortality.

I never realised how glorious a condition of mind it was possible for man to attain, until I met old Simon. He had managed to banish from his constitution the five inward foes that originally reign in every bosom, and which this old philosopher entitled the enemies within necessary to be conquered before you could become a complete man. These were—lust, anger, greed, envy, and vanity. He said that the secret of happiness was embalmed in that stanza written by the inspired ploughman—

“The honest heart that’s frae fra a’  
Intended fraud or guile,  
Wherever fortune kicks the ba’  
Will aye hae cause to smile.”

Up to this period of my life I had never been assailed by the tender passion, but in this first journey it was fated I should fall over head and ears in love with a gipsy girl. We were passing through the wild and picturesque ravines of the Dramlocks, on our way to Keith from Fochabers, and were resting in a sequestered nook, near a bridge that spans a deep valley in that mountainous district.

The day had turned out to be fine for the season; a fountain of clear water gushed from the rock beside us. We had unyoked the horse from the caravan and given him his mid-day corn, also attended to the comfort of our four-footed friends, and had just finished our own repast when there suddenly appeared upon the scene a gipsy girl of surpassing beauty.

Her large dark eyes shone like diamonds; her hair was the colour of the raven’s wing; and she had upon her dark expressive face a smile of ineffable sweetness. I saw that she gazed on me with a look of undisguised admiration, and I returned the compliment with interest.

Something moved my innermost emotions to an extent I never before experienced, and although I was generally pert enough of tongue, I felt so confused that I could not articulate a word, but kept my eyes steadily fixed on the vision of the beautiful girl, whose years might number some seventeen summers, who had so suddenly appeared before me.

She accosted me in a voice which to my ears sounded like the tinkling of sweet silver bells, and taking my left hand in hers she



proceeded to read my fortune by the science of palmistry, sweetly "sowthing" in a low tone the following words:—

"Your fate I can presage,  
From the lore of hoary age,  
Culled from many a holy sage  
In the long forgotten past.  
Yes, pass silver o'er my palm—  
Will your life be one great calm?  
Will love be to you a balm?  
Will your present fortune last?"

"I see in your Line of Life  
Trouble, sorrow, woe, and strife!  
You will only have one wife  
Who will bear you children three.  
Your Line of Fortune's crossed,  
Which will make you tempest-tossed,  
Sometimes right, but often lost—  
'Mid the storms of Fortune's sea!"

"From the twisted Line of Love,  
And the rugged Mount of Jove,  
Through your story will be wove;  
Pride, jealousy, and rage!  
The triple bracelets on your arm  
Show that your blood is warm;  
But you therein have a charm  
To bring you to old age.

"Venus, Saturn, and the Sun  
Tell of folly you should shun,  
For your fate seems to be spun  
With many a coloured thread!  
But fierce pride and strength of will  
Doth your soul with logic fill,  
Which will guard you from all ill  
In the city of the dead."

I suddenly recovered my self-possession, and said with a bantering laugh, "I suppose that for a silver shilling passed over your palm you sing the identical same song to every gallant whose hand you may read."

A troubled expression passed over the beautiful features of the gipsy girl, and there was a sad cadence in her voice when she replied:

"Nay, sir. Scoff not at the stars and their influence, for such things are sacred and should not be idly spoken of. I inherited the intuition which gives me the power to foretell the destiny of mankind from my mother, who inherited it from a long line of gipsy prophetesses."

I apologised in a very humble manner to the girl for my scoffing at her power of prophecy, and asked her what good fortune had brought her so suddenly in contact with us to read our fortunes.

She replied, "My name is Nancy Faa, and my father, who is at present head of the Zingari tribe in Scotland, is encamped in the wood with his followers about a mile hence. I suppose they will be thinking I have strayed for I left the tent about an hour ago and the beauty of the day, the sweet smell of the heather bells, and the enticing scenery made me ramble on till I came in sight of your caravan, and curiosity and business prompted me to pay you a visit."

All this time Simon had been a silent beholder of the encounter between me and the gipsy girl, and although there was an amused expression on his countenance, I could see very well that he was not altogether pleased, as he could not fail to observe the deep impression the girl's beauty had made upon my heart.

The girl talked away in a nice airy manner, asking questions about the showman life, and every moment I was with her I felt my passion increase.

Suddenly there was heard a loud shrill whistle from the ravine below which made Nancy suddenly start and change colour. She said it was a signal from the camp asking her presence to the mid-day meal. She made a movement, and ran off with the grace of a young fawn, and I could not resist the desire which actuated me to follow her, which I did as far as the bridge, where I again engaged her in conversation, and pressed her strongly to give me an assignation for the following evening, when I said, after we had finished our performance in Keith, I would walk out to meet her.

She was very coy and at first refused, but ultimately, deep blushes mantling her countenance, consented. I watched her graceful figure from the bridge as long as it was in sight, and when she disappeared in the wood I wended my way back to the caravan.

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## CHAPTER VI.

SIMON'S FRIENDLY ADVICE—WE SET UP IN THE "SQUAR" AT KEITH  
—HAVE A SUCCESSFUL EVENING—SIMON PHILOSOPHISING—MONEY  
AN ILLUSION—I DREAM—HAVE NIGHTMARE—VISIT THE FALLS OF  
TERNASH—SIMON'S ADMONITION—START TO KEEP MY ASSIGNATION.

While driving along the road to Keith on that autumn afternoon, old Simon tried to convince me of the glaring impropriety, in fact, downright stupidity, of fixing my affections on a member of that tribe of outcasts called gipsies. He reasoned that they were the vagabond race of the world; the worshippers of black art; the users of incantations; and the servants of the devil.

He acknowledged that the girl who had caught my fancy was as beautiful as an angel, but said I was not to forget that there were angels of darkness as well as angels of light.

"And again," he said, "John, although we were to put the argument on no higher a plane than common sense, the girl's people would not allow you to be honourably united to her, and I have a higher opinion of your moral rectitude than to suppose you would intend to enter into an illicit intercourse with a gipsy girl."

Although my reason gave assent to the potency and truth of old Simon's admonition, my passion for Nancy Faa was of so absorbing a nature that he might, with as great a probability of success, have reasoned with the winds, or asked the billows of the ocean to cease their roaring.

Love, and particularly calf-love, is of so devouring a nature that it despises caution, denounces reason, makes the wise foolish, the timid bold, and the bold cowardly.

I was in a perfect fever with love's intoxication. I realized the truth of Hogg's verse:—

"Were Nancy, love, to hire the job,  
An' save my heart frae breakin', O,  
I'd put a girdle round the globe,  
Or dive in Corrivreckin, O;  
I'd houk a grave at midnight dark  
In yonder vault sae eerie, O,  
Or gang an' seek for Mungo Park  
Through Afric's wilds sae dreary, O.  
Love, love, love, lassie,  
Love is like a dizziness,  
It winna lat a puir bodie  
Gang aboot his busyness."

I did not argue the matter with old Simon, but busied myself when we arrived in the "Squar" at Keith in making everything ready in the caravan, erecting the platform, hoisting the highly coloured paintings which portrayed our animals in the act of performing, lighted the paraffin lamps (half a dozen of them) to cause a glare to attract the populace, mounted the pan's-pipes on my breast, and with two drumsticks to play myself an accompaniment, rattled off the lively air of the "Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre."

Old Simon, who stood on the platform beside the entrance door, acted in the double capacity of "fugleman" and money-taker.

At intervals, between the tunes supplied by the orchestra, of which I was the sole and individual member, he harangued the natives, inviting them to come and see the most marvellous, most wonderful, and human-like performances of his learned animals—all for the charge of twopence; children under ten, one penny; infants in arms cordially invited and admitted "free gratis and for nothing."

We started about eight o'clock in the evening, and had four bumper houses by eleven, when we closed highly satisfied with our night's work.

By the time we had suppered and groomed our animals, and put everything to rights it was past midnight, and while we sat over our own supper of cold meat and bread and cheese, Simon again cautioned me to have nothing more to do with the gipsy girl.

I made no promise, although I said little about it, being fully determined to keep the tryst I had made with Nancy Faa in the Dramlocks.

While we sat smoking our pipes and wetting our throats occasionally with a "waucht" of nappy tenpenny from the flagon, old Simon, as was his wont, when the cares and duties of the day had closed, launched into one of his philosophical dissertations, and the subject of his discourse on this particular evening I recollect well was on what he called the king of illusions—money.

"Money," he said, "is the king of the world. If we desire more money than we can rightfully claim, we wish for something that does not belong to us but to another, and we thus repulse the divine principle of truth. If we obtain labour without paying for it its proper equivalent we deprive others of justice, and therefore deprive ourselves of the principle of truth, which is a more serious

loss to ourselves than the loss of money to the defrauded. The poor clamour for money; the rich crave for more; and the general desire is to obtain the greatest amount of reward by giving the least possible equivalent. Priests save souls and doctors cure bodies for money; law is sold to him who is able and willing to pay; fame and reputation and the semblance of love can be obtained for money; and the worth of man is expressed in the sum of pounds, shillings, and pence, which he may call his own."

Then turning to me, he said, "All this, John, is a gross worldly illusion. Try and never forget that—

" 'The rank is but the guinea stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that;  
And though you put the self same mark  
On copper, brass, and a' that,  
The lie is gross, the cheat is plain,  
And will not pass for a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
'Tis soul and heart and a' that  
That makes the king a gentleman,  
And no his crown and a' that.  
And whether he be rich or puir,  
The best he is for a' that,  
That stands erect in self-respect,  
And acts the man for a' that.' "

The old man then diverged (looking at me as if he read the thoughts of my very soul) into the philosophy of love. He talked long and learnedly on the subject, citing cases and illustrations from history—such as the love of Heloise to Abailard; Goethe to Bettine; Marianna to Captain Chamilly; of how Napoleon greeted Josephine from Marmiolo, and sent a kiss to his wife's lap-dog; of Nelson battering down Copenhagen, and then composing verses to his Emma—Lady Hamilton; of how Marianna, with the strength and vehemence of the ancient Medea, wrote from the solitude of a religious house those love letters which are said to be the greatest literary achievement of Portugal; and "I will sum up," he said, "in the weighty words of a man of wisdom, who says: 'Love, to be strong, must be pure and unalloyed with selfish considerations. If we love a thing on account of the use we can make of it, we do not in reality love that thing, but ourselves. Pure love has only the well-being of its object in view; it does not calculate profits, and is not afraid of disadvantages that may grow out of its love. The intellect calculates, but love follows the

law of attraction. Impure love is weak and does not enter into its object; it may cause a ruffle on the soul of another, but does not penetrate to the centre. Pure love penetrates and cannot be resisted, unless it is opposed by another love of equal strength, but streaming in another direction. The most potent love potion a person can give another is to love that person without any selfish object in view. Pure love will infuse itself into the soul of the beloved, and call forth corresponding vibrations of love, because one mode of activity gives rise to similar modes according to the universal law of induction. If you wish to progress on the road to perfection take lessons in love. Learn to love the highest and you will be attracted by it. Seek in every man those qualities which appear to be high, and cover his mistakes by charity and love. If you speak ill of another you speak ill of yourself, because he who prominently notices the faults of another must have the elements of those faults in himself. A vain person is repulsed by the vanity of another; a liar expects from others the truth; a thief does not wish his own property taken away; virtues attract each other, producing harmony; but vices repulse each other, and discord is the result.' "

Simon discoursed away in this manner to my infinite delight for an hour, after which we went to bed.

There was, however, little sleep for me that evening, my thoughts wandered back to the gipsy girl and speculated on the reception I was likely to receive from her when I met her on the bridge according to appointment.

I determined to ask her to become my wife, as in my then state of mind I thought the world would be a poor world to me without her presence and company to gladden it. Having arrived at this point in my reflections I sank into slumber, but not to rest, for my sleep was disturbed by dreams—one exquisitely delightful followed by another terrifically horrible.

I imagined I was wandering with the queen of my heart adown the sylvan banks of a rippling stream, my arm encircling her waist, while she clung to me and looked up into my face with affectionate devotion. All nature seemed happy around us. The lark carolled in the blue empyrean; the thrush sang sweetly on a willow at our side; the very flowers seemed to rejoice as they nodded and glittered in the sun's rays, proudly disclosing their resplendent colours; the very stream seemed to laugh as it mean-

dered over its pebbly bed. But a change came o'er the spirit of my dream. I fancied I was on a lonely road in the centre of a wood. Nothing living was visible, and no habitation in sight; the wind moaned and howled through the trees, and a fitful light occasionally lit up the path which I trod when the moon happened for a moment to show her face, which she did occasionally, through a rift of the fast driving, stormy clouds.

I felt uneasy and terrified, and had the feeling that a lurking foe would suddenly pounce upon me and overpower me. Nor was I mistaken, for at a sudden turn of the road I encountered a tall dark form in a slouched hat, carrying a bludgeon in his hand, who without a word of warning felled me to the ground, and kneeling upon my breast, compressed my throat firmly with his left hand while his right hand held aloft a glittering knife, which he seemed ready the next moment to plunge into my bosom, when ———.

I found myself, the blanket and coverlets lying beside me, on the floor of the caravan, the sweat standing in beads on my forehead, and old Simon beside me saying,

“I rather doubt, John, you took more of that sour milk cheese last night than was good for you, and so brought on an attack of nightmare.”

My mind soon recovered its equilibrium, and a good wash and a cup of coffee entirely obliterated from my memory the incidents of the dream, which I did not give much heed to, although I was inclined afterwards to believe it was in a certain degree prophetic.

The day passed slowly. How slow and leaden-footed is time when we are waiting the arrival of the trysting hour; but on this I need not expatiate, as all young lovers have experienced the feeling.

To kill time I wandered the village of Keith, and, directed by one of the inhabitants, I visited the romantic waterfall of Ternash in the neighbourhood, and after feasting my eyes on the beautiful cascade in the centre of the wood, I idly cut my initials on the limestone rock, alongside of hundreds that had been cut there in a similar manner, and which I suppose may be seen to this day by any one visiting this spot.

I met here a very intelligent old fellow who appeared to be brimful of all the legendary lore of the neighbourhood, and who among many other things told me that our national bard's great-great-grandfather was meal miller of Ternash, and about forty yard

from the foot of the waterfall he pointed out the old race-course and some of the foundations of the mill—once wrought by honest John Burness.

Thus the day wore away. We again had a successful evening at the show, and when we finished business about eleven o'clock, I told old Simon that the moon was shining as clear as day, and that as I did not feel inclined for sleep, I would take a sharp walk for a mile or two in order to insure a sound night's repose.

"Well, well, John," said old Simon, and I could observe that there was a knowing smile on his face when he thus addressed me, "you can do so; but remember, my lad, to take good care of thyself, as poor old Simon would now, after having tasted of thy companionship, feel doubly lonely without you.

I replied cheerfully to the old man that there was nothing to fear, and directed my steps at a rapid pace to the bridge at the Dramlocks, where I had appointed to meet the gipsy girl.

*(To be continued).*





JOHN MORRISON,  
*POET, MUSICIAN, AND TRAVELLING SHOWMAN*  
BY  
DONALD J. JOLLY.

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CHAPTER VII.

WALK TO DRAMLOCKS—BEAUTIFUL MOONLIGHT—THE POETS ON THE  
MOON—MEET NANCY—THE PARTING ON THE BRIDGE—A BIRD  
OF EVIL OMEN.

As I mentioned at the conclusion of last chapter, the moon was shining clearly in the heavens when I left old Simon at the caravan, and took my way down Mid-street, past the old Parish Church of Keith (an elegant and commodious building in the modern Gothic architecture), which stands at the foot of the town, away across the Auld Brig o' Keith that spans the river Isla, rapidly ascended the steep ascent which runs through Fife-Keith, and then straight out the fine turnpike road that leads to Fochabers. I was soon past the braes of Enzie, where the road strikes off to Buckie, and so impatient was I to meet with the gipsy girl who had so enthralled my affections that within an hour of the time I left Keith I was standing on the bridge where we had arranged to meet.

There is something peculiarly soothing to a poetic temperament in the calm stillness of a moonlight ramble. This night, I remember very well, was still and calm. The moon was about full, and shone with great clearness and beauty from the mid-heaven; no mist was abroad, on the forest, hill, and dale not a cloud was to be seen in all the horizon, unless in the far east where a bank of fleecy clouds appeared to form, as it were, a fringe hanging from the heavens touching the earth.

A volume could be written on the poets' references to the moon. Shelley speaks of her as—

“That robed maiden with white fire laden,  
Whom mortals call the moon.”

Burns thus apostrophises her—

“Oh thou pale orb that silent shines  
While care-untroubled mortals sleep,”

And Byron thus philosophises on her mystic power—

—“Lover, poet, or astronomer,  
Shepherd, or swain, whoever may behold,  
Feels some abstraction when they gaze on her.  
Great thoughts we catch from thence . . .

Deep secrets to her rolling light are told ;  
The ocean's tides and mortals brains she sways,  
And also hearts, if these be truth in lays.”

I was all impatience and disappointment at not having met with Nancy, but I consoled myself with the reflection that something might have unexpectedly occurred to detain her.

I have always had an eye for the wild and picturesque in nature, and as I stood and gazed from the bridge in the stillness of that October night I was struck with awe at the magnificence of the scenery. Looking down into the ravine below I thought it would be a grand study for a painter to transfer to canvas its striking beauty. The ravine which the bridge spans at this point is some hundred and fifty feet below the level of the road ; a mountain stream dashes down its centre ; its sides are clothed with fir, and here and there is a grove of sweet smelling birks, and looking from the bridge the tallest trees, which are well down the ravine, seemed dwarfed and small.

In all my travels I have only once come across one other place which, for this peculiar beauty, at all comes up to this scene in the Dramlocks, and that is in the north of Ireland, on the road between Cushindall and Ballycastle.

I was sitting on the parapet of the bridge in deep thought when suddenly I felt two soft hands clasped across my eyes so as to blindfold me, and a silvery laugh told me that the queen of my heart, the gipsy girl Nancy Faa, had thus suddenly and unceremoniously appeared upon the scene.

After I had recovered from the start her sudden appearance had given me, I asked if her father and the members of the band were aware of her absence. She told me that the reason she had been so long in coming was that she had to wait until the band were all asleep, and then she had quietly slipped away, and, as she supposed, no one was aware of her absence.

“Nancy,” I said, “I do not know anything about the customs, rites, and traditions of thy people with regard to love and marriage, but this I know—I am desirous to make you my lawful wedded wife. I never knew what love was until I saw you two days ago, and from the love-light which I think I see shining from your beautiful eyes, I believe that my love is at least partially returned.

At this point of my discourse Nancy’s eyes sought the ground in maiden modesty; while I could feel her hand which was clasped in mine trembling. I resumed—“I have nothing to offer you, only the position of a showman’s wife, a life of care and hardship probably, but I can give you the richest gift that mortal man can bestow—the undivided homage and love of a true, honest man.”

Nancy sighed deeply and said—“I cannot deny but that the first moment I saw you my heart appeared to centre its affection on you, John, but I must tell you that I am already promised to Reuben Faa, a true Romanie and a descendant of one of the kingly Faas of Yetholm, who is destined in the future to succeed my father in the kingship of the tribe in Scotland, and although I never can love him as I love you, it would be like fighting the stars to imagine that we will ever be united.”

There was deep sorrow in the tones of her voice as she gave expression to the last of these words.

We wandered along the road and sat down by the side of the fountain where we had rested when on the road to Fochabers, and where I first beheld the girl who now sat beside me.

My affection lent eloquence and persuasion to my tongue. I pictured how miserable existence would be to me without the presence of her own dear self. I spoke all these airy nothings which are so ludicrous unless to the two parties directly interested, and at last, from the tears in her eyes and the sweet look on her face, I could see that a little more gentle pressure would carry my point.

I kissed her sweet, and kissed her soft—  
Upon her fair face oft and oft;

I felt the moment was divine  
When she sighed low she would be mine.

We signed, sealed, and ratified our engagement with many a loving kiss. To quote a verse from a poem I wrote long afterwards—

How sweet is a kiss in the first dawn of love  
When that passion’s first felt by the soul;

'Tis methinks a foretaste of the joys up above,  
And greater when felt in some pleasant grove,  
As with Adam when the first one he stole.

But alas for the fleeting nature of human happiness! We had soon, too soon, to descend from the ecstatic state we were then in and return to the commonplace realities of life.

The barriers to our union had to be considered; Nancy's father's consent had to be asked and obtained; Simon Proudfoot had to be consulted, and we arranged that all this would be done on the morrow.

With many a vow and fond embrace we at last recognised the necessity of tearing ourselves asunder until then. We had wandered back to the bridge, and were just on the point of saying adieu when a screech-owl flew from his perch on one of the fir trees in the ravine below, and the eerie scream he emitted resounded from cliff to cliff, and its hideous sound coming upon us so suddenly and unexpectedly made our hearts stand still. Nancy, who was deeply imbued with the superstition of her race, looked sorrowfully into my eyes and said—

“Ah, John, this is a bird of ill omen, and foretells broken hearts, trouble, sorrow, grief, and woe, and that our paths in life will be wide apart.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

COGITATIONS ON THE ROAD BACK TO KEITH—I REACH THE CARAVAN  
—WELCOMED BY MY DUMB FRIENDS—TALK WITH SIMON IN  
THE MORNING—START FOR THE GIPSY CAMP—FIGHT WITH  
REUBEN FAA—THE GIPSY KING'S RAGE—NANCY'S SIGNAL

My feelings as I walked back to Keith after I parted with Nancy on the bridge at the Dramlocks were of a varied description. Calm reflection considerably damped the elation of mind I had experienced when in the presence of my charmer. Not that I loved Nancy any the less, but somehow the more I thought upon the obstacles that beset the course of our love the more I feared that it would be impossible to overcome them; besides, although my mind was far from having a superstitious tendency, I was startled, not to say awed, at the incident of the owl, and the effect it had on us both at the time and the prediction which Nancy had

pronounced of misfortune and disaster, would, although I tried hard to banish it from my thoughts, continually recur.

It was well into the small hours of the morning when I reached the caravan. I slipped gently in, so as not to disturb old Simon's peaceful slumbers. I was enabled to do so, as I and the animals in the caravan had become great friends, not even "Old Boatswain," the noble Newfoundland dog, who constituted himself, and was the faithful guardian and protector of our travelling home, gave a growl. Sagacious old "Boatswain" greeted me when I slipped quietly in, with a few wags of his enormous tail; "Madge Wild-fire," the performing pony, who had a nice stall in the further end of the waggon, also neighed gladly; while "Beppo," the monkey, who always slept on the same couch as "Blanche," the toy Italian Greyhound, with his arms round the little dog's neck, opened his eyes and looked as if to say, "Make as little noise as possible, and do not awaken Blanche."

We were indeed an agreeable and happy family, and might have been copied with advantage by many families entirely composed of human beings.

I thought at the time and have often reflected since, that the kind gentle nature of these poor dumb animals was to a great extent due to the influence of the calm, benign, benevolent, unselfish disposition of their old master—Simon Proudfoot.

I have often observed that a horse, a dog, or even a bird which is constantly in the company of a vicious master, frequently evinces the same churlish, ill-natured proclivities as its owner.

When I awoke rather late in the morning, I found that old Simon had been up hours before me, and had fed and dressed the animals, tidied up the caravan, cooked the breakfast, and having regard to my late ramble, he had only summoned me when all was ready.

While we sat at breakfast I detailed to my kind old friend everything that had happened to me on the past night.

"Well, John," he said, "although I am still of opinion that you are bound on a course that will not likely be conducive to your own happiness, I will not stand in the way should you obtain the gipsy king's consent to the union between you and the gipsy girl, but will welcome her to a share of our poor comforts and try what I can to make her position happy and agreeable."

This consent to our arrangements gave me unbounded satis-

faction, and I hastened with hopes exultant, and spirits high to visit the gipsy camp.

When the spirits are high, and when "hope springs exultant on triumphant wing," fatigue is unknown, and the gladness of the whole mind makes everything around us appear bright and beautiful. So it was with me on this morning, as I held my way at a rapid pace towards the gipsy encampment.

There was gladness in the gentle breeze that shook the trees, rapture in the song of the birds that flitted from bough to bough ; and the very cows that pastured on the meadows appeared to me to be the embodiment of quiet content.

I had passed the bridge where I had parted with Nancy some hours before, and taken the footpath leading down the ravine in the direction where I knew the gipsies were encamped. The path I trod was a very narrow one, formed on the brink of the ravine, the other side being a perpendicular bank covered with ferns and lichen very beautiful to behold. So narrow was the pathway that it would have been absolutely impossible for two persons to have walked abreast, and little if any room for two persons meeting on it to pass each other.

Suddenly from round a bend in the pathway, caused by a large boulder rock, appeared a figure, which as soon as I clapt eyes on it brought back my dream of two nights before. He had on the same slouched hat, and carried a bludgeon in his hand. He was tall, blackaviced, with a tawny complexion, and dark eyes whose keen ferrety expression betokened cruelty, cunning, and hate. He thus addressed me—

"Who are you who sneak about under the cover of night, taking an undue advantage of one of our tribe?"

He did not wait for a reply, and I could see from the fiendish look he had that he meant mischief, or perhaps murder. I thought that for my own safety the sooner I acted on the aggressive the better. He had drawn the hand behind in which he held his bludgeon, as I thought, for the purpose of giving it a better swing, when he brought it down, as I could see he intended to do on my head.

I had not been a circus employee for nothing. I had met among my compatriots there some of the best fighting men in the country, and we occupied our leisure hours occasionally in practising and learning each other the noble art of self-defence. I was con-

sequently up to all the "tips," so that before Reuben Faa, (for I strongly jaloused that he was the man that stood before me, and that his passion and purpose was prompted by jealousy), could move a finger, I hit him with all my force a right-hander just under the chin which sent him spinning down the bank into the ravine below.

I was a little startled when I saw the tall fellow hurling down the bank, thinking that his brains would be dashed out on the sharp corners of the rocks in the bed of the stream, but was rather pleased to observe that just about a foot or so before his head would have struck a rock, his descent was impeded by the trunk of a considerable-sized tree. As I saw he did not rise, I quickly as I could made my way down to where his body lay to ascertain the extent of his injuries. I was glad to find that although unconscious he breathed heavily, and so far as I could see, he had sustained no material injury, although sorely bruised; and when I gave him the blow beneath the chin, as I could see from the mark, my knuckle had struck his windpipe—hence the unconsciousness.

What was to be done! Here was I bent on a mission of love and conciliation to this gipsy band, and before I had come into the chief's presence to deliver my request, and sue for his consent, it surely was a bad beginning to nearly kill one of the important members thereof.

I thought this chap might recover soon, and follow me to the camp and thus frustrate all my plans. I felt my pockets for a cord to bind him so that I would be free from his interruption, but failed to find one.

I then searched the pockets of my prostrate foe, and found therein a long stout leather thong with which I quickly bound Reuben fast to the tree he was lying beside, and then took my way rapidly down the ravine.

In the course of ten minutes or so I came in sight of the gipsy tents. They had selected their position well, being protected by the hip of the hill from the east wind, and yet so placed that they got the full advantage of the sun all day. There were five tents in all, and I could see that the centre one was of a superior build in every way to the other four. There would be squatted round these tents in various attitudes about thirty gipsies, some of them busily engaged making tin ware, others coarse wicker baskets, and a few of them fashioning with great deftness and ingenuity horn-spoons.

Although it was still two hours from mid-day, there was a large fire of sticks and brushwood burning brightly, over which was suspended a huge pot fastened to a triangle, in which was already simmering their mid-day meal.

From the odour of the steam which the pot emitted, my nostrils informed me that a savoury mess was being prepared to regale the band.

At the door of the large tent there sat an old man. He was rather better dressed than the others, and although slightly stooped with age, he must have been when in his prime a very stalwart specimen of a gipsy. He wore on his head a glengarry bonnet, and hanging over his forehead and down his neck was a large shock of grizzly grey hair. His beard was also unkempt and grizzly; his eyebrows had not lost their colour, and were jet black, bushy, and nearly hid his fierce small dark eyes. The redeeming feature in his countenance was a broad massive forehead, looking at which it instinctively struck the beholder that the man was of strong will, great determination, and not to be trifled with.

Although all the members of the camp knew of my presence, none of them, either by word, look, or sign, took the slightest notice of me; but I could see the face of Nancy looking out behind the folds of one of the tents, and although, when first my eyes caught her face, it had a dejected woe-begone expression; the moment she recognised me it lit up with a beautiful smile betokening love and devotion.

I advanced toward the old gipsy king, and thus addressed him: "Sir, I must tell you in a few words who I am, and what is my errand. My name is John Morrison, a showman by profession, and the caravan in which I serve is at present in the adjacent town of Keith. In passing through the Dranlocks on our way from Fochabers the other day I chanced to meet your daughter, Nancy. It was a case of love at first sight, and I have seen her since, and she has consented so become my wife, as we believe we cannot live without each other, and should you consent to our marriage I will prove a true and loving husband, and never give her cause to regret the love and confidence she has placed in me. My old master, Simon Proudfoot, is prepared to receive her as a daughter, and install her mistress of the caravan which we own, and the only thing now wanted for our happiness and felicity is your consent to our union.



While I spoke these words in the most ingratiating manner I was master of, I could see gathering on the brow of the old tinkler an expression of demoniac rage. His frame shook with passion, his angry eyes flamed, and there burst from his lips a perfect torrent of reviling and abuse.

I could only catch a sentence here and there, so fierce and rapid was his utterance.

“Begone thou vile reptile of a house-dweller! Would you dare to aspire to mate with the daughter of a long line of kings. I had rather see her dead before me, ay, I would rather strike her dead than see her united to such as you. Take to thy heels while you yet live, thou caitiff. Thinkest thou that the lion can mate with the wolf; that the eagle can be a fit companion for the crow, or that she—destined to be the queen of her race—would stoop to herd with a vagabond mountebank. Ho, there Dick, Mat, and Reuben!”

When he mentioned these names three stalwart gipsies sprang to his side, and the old man, who was by this time foaming at the mouth, pointed to me and yelled.

“Should this base-born scullion not disappear from my sight, I charge you to sheath your knives in his recreant heart.”

I could see from the alacrity with which the gipsies drew their knives that they were perfectly prepared, in fact that it would give them pleasure, to execute the behests of their old king. All this time Nancy had been standing behind her father, and during the enactment of this strange scene so much affected was she that the tear drops were hailing down her cheeks. I believe, so much was I infatuated with this gipsy girl, that I would have stood to be cut in pieces by the band had I not observed Nancy give me a signal in dumb show to at once decamp, and if I translated her signs aright that she would meet me in the wood above the bridge.

*(To be continued).*

# John Morrison,

*POET, MUSICIAN, AND TRAVELLING SHOWMAN*

BY

DONALD J. JOLLY.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

LEAVE THE ENCAMPMENT—TAKE UP MY POSITION IN THE WOOD—  
SOLILOQUISE—NANCY MEETS ME—INTERRUPTED BY THE GIPSY  
BAND—THEY DRAG NANCY AWAY—BIND AND GAG ME.

ASTONISHED, astounded, my self-esteem deeply wounded by the deep scorn and contemptuous manner of my reception by the gipsy king, Nancy's father, I felt greater mortification than I ever experienced either before or since. So long as I was within earshot, I heard the passionate tones of the old fellow's voice wildly vociferating and cursing, and although I was soon at too great a distance to catch the sense of his words, I was well aware they were condemnatory of myself and denunciatory of my impudence in daring to aspire to the hand of his daughter.

I swiftly traversed the pathway by which I had reached the camp, and on arrival at the point where I had tied the young gipsy to the tree, I found that he had either been unloosed by a passing friend, or that on recovering consciousness he had managed to extricate himself from the leather thong. He had likely, when released, taken a near cut to the encampment expecting to find me there.

I hurried along, crossed the bridge, and was soon in the centre of the wood, where I expected Nancy Faa would meet me. As I said before, it was a beautiful day for the season, and as I rested on a mossy bank in the centre of an open glade my mind, which up to this point had been in a turmoil of anger and indignation, began to regain its equanimity.

"What," I said to myself, "is this old tinkler after all but a member of the despised tribe of Zingaries, whose name in itself is a reproach and a byeword, being synonymous with rogue, thief,

and vagabond. Were it not that his person was sacred to me, because he is Nancy's father, I would have struck him down like a bullock where he stood."

Nancy's name brought tender thoughts to my mind, and I at length began to realise the wisdom of old Simon's words—"that my love escapade would never bring me happiness." But when was love, particularly youthful love, ever wise? or when did it ever study consequences or contingencies. It looks on everything connected with itself as bright, and glad, and happy?

Musing thus I heard a light footfall crackling the withered leaves and twigs. The foliage was so dense that I could see little distance into the wood, so that a few minutes elapsed after I first heard the rapid footfalls before my love, Nancy, her hair dishevelled, her eyes red with weeping, and her cheeks flushed with exertion, burst into the glade.

She gazed round her with a look of alarm, and bursting into a flood of tears rushed into my arms and nestled her head on my breast.

"My darling love," I cried, "your father's command! no, nor the arms of a thousand gipsies will separate us. Cheer up your heart and we will fly together where they cannot and dare not follow."

Scarcely had I spoken these words when ten stalwart gipsies appeared at various points of the glade, completely surrounding us, so that escape was impossible. Among the number I recognised my late adversary, Reuben Faa, and the old gipsy king, Nancy's father.

They at once advanced and tore the dear girl from my arms. I denounced them as cowardly villains, cut-throats, and blackguards; I offered to fight them all one by one if they had the real stuff in them, and gave me fair play, and said they would do this if they were men and not cowardly poltroons, but without speaking one word, three of them laid me on the sward, slipped a gag into my mouth and bound me firmly to a noble oak tree in the middle of the glade, and then without even giving one look behind they disappeared as silently as they came.

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## CHAPTER IX.

BECOME UNCONSCIOUS—RECOVER—AGONISING THOUGHTS—“BOAT-SWAIN” TO THE RESCUE—SIMON PROUDFOOT—END OF LOVE ESCAPADE.

It was a happy thing for me that shortly after I was bound to the oak tree in the centre of the glade, as detailed at the close of last chapter, that I became unconscious.

Whether it had been the intense excitement through which I had passed on that day, or the tightness of the thongs with which I was fastened to the tree, that had caused this unconsciousness, I cannot tell; but I thought at the time, and I have often thought since, that it was a merciful intervention of Providence to relieve me from much pain of body, anxiety of mind, and probably madness.

When I recovered my senses a heavy dew was falling, and through the light mist which enveloped the earth I could see that the sky was lighted up by the rays of the moon. This told me that I had been many hours in my peculiar and unpleasant predicament, for the sun was little past the meridian when the woeful incident of Nancy being dragged from my arms took place.

Fever was in my blood, my throat was parched, and I really think if it had not been for the dew that was falling on my face, of which I could sip a little to cool my parched tongue, I would have gone mad.

My thoughts were those of a demon. I thirsted for revenge on the scoundrels who had bound me so securely to the tree, and my thoughts then wandered back to the days of my childhood. I thought of my father and mother. It really is a very peculiar phase in human nature that we never feel remorse unless when in trouble. I now bitterly regretted my conduct, and made the usual promises to myself—which are never kept—that if ever I was relieved out of my present strait I would do everything I could to atone for my misbehaviour in the past. I then thought of poor old Simon, for I knew he would be in a great state about me, and I cursed myself as an unlucky fool, who had not only brought misfortune on myself, but also brought misfortune and trouble on those with whom I was connected, or took an interest in me.

I twisted, I struggled to break the thongs that held me; but they resisted all my strength and struggles. I gained nothing by

my efforts but increased pain, for my exertions made the thongs sink deep into my flesh. I would have howled, but the wooden gag in my mouth prevented that process, and I was just ready again, from sheer disappointment and despair, to sink back into unconsciousness, when a large black object came leaping towards me, but not before he had placed his two paws on my shoulders and was kindly licking my face with his soft tongue did I recognise my friend "Boatswain," Simon Proudfoot's Newfoundland dog.

The old chap, who had more intelligence than the majority of human beings, after the first ebullition of his delight was exhausted, examined me carefully all over, whimpering like a child, and I could see from the look in his eyes that he was very much disappointed that I did not speak to him in terms of endearment as was my wont.

I, however, shook my head, and poor old "Boatswain" appeared to realise what was the matter for his deep voice gave vent to a number of quick sharp barks; not barks of anger but rather barks of joy which had the effect of bringing old Simon Proudfoot on the scene, who had too much sense to express any astonishment or to then ask any frivolous and unnecessary questions, but proceeded at once with the aid of his jack-knife to cut the thongs which bound me.

My limbs were so stiff that when released I staggered and fell, but from the spring on the roadside which I mentioned before, Simon brought in his hat some nice cool water of which he told me to drink sparingly. I did so, and a sweeter draught never crossed my lips, and with the remainder he bathed my temples and soon had me so far recovered that I could limp slowly along with him on our way back to Keith.

I may say at this point that from that day to this, although I have oft looked for her on the lonely hill road, in the streets of the crowded city, in theatre, circus, or show, in market, fair, or race-course, I never again saw or heard of the gipsy girl who first awoke the love-passion within me, through whose influence I had the startling adventure I have but feebly attempted to recount, and so completely and unaccountably did she disappear from the horizon of my life that, looking back through the mists of the past forty-one years, I find it difficult not to imagine that it was all a dream.

*(To be continued.)*

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## CHAPTER X.

LEAVE KEITH—BRISK BUSINESS IN BUCKIE—PATRONISED BY GORDON OF CLUNY—"MILL O' TIFTIE'S ANNIE"—VISIT HER GRAVE—OLD SIMON PROUDFOOT BREAKING UP—VISIT THE SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF HARLAW.

WE remained with our caravan in the "Squar" at Keith for another three days after the escapade described in the last chapter; not that we did any business in the show line, indeed, we did not open for exhibition, as old Simon said I required rest and a little nursing to bring back the equilibrium of both body and mind after my trying adventure. So vigorous was my constitution, and so quickly does the system recuperate when young, that by the end of the three days I was physically completely recovered, although, mentally, scarcely the man I was before.

We did not take the direct road to Aberdeen, as it was necessary, in the prosecution of our business, to visit all the towns and villages on the route.

On leaving Keith, our first day's journey of fourteen miles brought us to the thriving fishing village of Buckie, even at this time one of the most important fishing stations in the Moray Firth, and we fixed up our caravan on the green at the foot of the brae.

We were largely patronised by the fishers, who had just completed a very successful season, and the really wonderful performance of our dumb friends tickled the fancy of the fishermen so much, that we did good business for an entire week.

The fame of our show even had the effect of attracting the lord superior, Gordon of Cluny, on the second night we opened, to see our performance, and this brought many of the well-to-do people of the district also.

At the end of the week we shifted to Cullen, from thence to Portsoy, then to Macluff. Our next stage was Cuminestown, and as we were now in a hurry to reach Aberdeen, we only stopped one night at each place, at the most two.

The weather had now broken down, winter was approaching, and I could see that the fatigue of the road, and the duties of the entertainment, were beginning to tell sorely on my kind old friend, Simon Proudfoot.

I did what I could to lighten his work, but it was not possible to relieve him when the performance was going on, as it required our combined energies to entertain the public.

When we arrived in the market-town of Turriff, which we did in the market-day, I thought that old Simon was to be laid up altogether. We consequently did not open, and next morning proceeded to the beautiful village of Fyvie, an easy stage of five miles.

Here, leaving old Simon to rest in the caravan, I took a stroll to view the castle and scenery surrounding Fyvie, as it appealed strongly to my poetic temperament, being the theatre of the beautiful old ballad, "Andrew Lammie, the Trumpeter of Fyvie." I wandered

"Up and doon in Tiftie's den,  
Where the burn runs clear and bonnie,"

and examined with great interest the entrance gate to the castle, above which stands a representation in stone of the famous Andrew Lammie, with his trumpet in his hand.

In all my peregrinations, in Scotland, England, and Ireland, I have never lost the chance, when in the neighbourhood, of visiting the scene of famous drama, ballad, or novel.

He who has traversed the Trossachs has a higher appreciation of Scott's "Lady of the Lake," than he who has never seen the sublime magnificence of the scenery that inspired the poet's lay. "The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow" require to be visited before the ballad can be thoroughly appreciated, and if we have not wandered by the river Leader in Fair Melrose, we cannot understand half the beauty of "The Broom of the Cowdenknowes."

I wandered about Fyvie repeating the beautiful ballad, and by chance met the dominie of the village, with whom I entered into conversation, and having as well as myself a love for ballad lore, he kindly showed me the various places mentioned in the ballad

such as the Bridge of Sleugh. The lines having reference to this bridge says—

“ With tears I'll view the bridge of Sleugh  
Where I parted last with Annie.”

This old dominie told me that it was a received superstition in that part of the country, that when friends or lovers part at a bridge they never meet again. He also took me to the churchyard, where we saw the gravestone of Annie, with the date of her death thereon—1631, and probably my own recent sad experience made me repeat over Annie's grave with greater fervency than I would have done a week before—

“ Then will I speed to the kirkyard,  
To the green kirkyard of Fyvie,  
With tears I'll water my love's grave  
Till I follow Tiftie's Annie.

Ye parents grave who children have,  
In crushing them be canny,  
Lest when too late you do repent !  
Remember Tiftie's Annie.”

I sought the caravan that night with a sorrowful heart, for the sad fate of Tiftie's Annie brought strongly to my remembrance my love disappointment with Nancy Faa.

Old Meldrum was our next stage, and here we diverged a little from the direct route to visit the romantic little town of Inverurie, which is beautifully situated on a peninsula formed by the river Urie on the north, and the Don on the south, and one of the most ancient Royal Burghs in Scotland. From the town you can get a fine view of the peaks of Bennachie. Near here was fought the Battle of Harlaw, in 1411, between Donald of the Isles and the Earl of Mar, nephew to the Duke of Albany, Regent of Scotland, during the captivity of James I.

“ Then as I walkit on the way,  
To Inverury as I went  
I met a man, and bad him stay,  
Requesting him to mak' me 'quaint  
Of the beginning and the event,  
That happenit thair at the Harlaw ;  
Then he entreated me tak' tent,  
And he the truth sould to me schaw.”

Simon Proudfoot, who I think had the cream of all this country's ballads by heart, repeated to me, as we drove along to Aberdeen,



the whole thirty-one double verses of this historical ditty occasionally dilating at length on the various personages who took part in the battle.

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CHAPTER XI.

REACH ABERDEEN — GLOOMY WEATHER — DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN—SIMON'S PARTING ADVICE—HIS DEATH.

It was a bitter cold day in October when we at last made Aberdeen.

The sun had not shown his face for days; the keen east wind pierced one to the very bone, and occasional showers of snow, added to the dreary desolation.

How much does the condition of nature determine the condition of the mind. In sunshine we are glad and buoyant, and

“ When the rotten woodland drips,  
And the leaf is stamped in clay,”

we are morose, and sad, and melancholy.

I have now to record one of the saddest events of my life. The time had come when I was to lose the kind old fellow who had proved more than a father to me. I was shortly to realise the truth of the philosophical aphorism, “ death is often as great a change to those that are left behind as it is to those who have gone before.”

I will never forget the calm serenity of mind, the quiet courage, and the complete absence of anything like fear or doubt with which Simon Proudfoot met the grim king of terrors.

Towards the latter end I had called in the doctor to see if anything could be done to prolong his days. The leech told me that my friend would in all human probability die that night or early next morning. He had not slept much for days, but this afternoon, I remember, he had sunk into a sweet, peaceful, pleasant sleep.

I sat beside his bed with his hand in mine, waiting anxiously for him to awake, as I believed it would be the last time I would have an opportunity on earth of conversing with him.

As I looked on the fine old face with its intellectual brow, finely chiselled nostrils, delicately pencilled eyebrows, clean-cut mouth, and decisive resolute chin, I could not but think here lay one of

nature's nobility, and that the rabid radical and senseless socialist may stump and rave about one man being as good as another, and so on, but surely we have only to use our eyes to convince ourselves that there are in the human family as mighty differences—mentally, morally, and physically—as there is between the soaring eagle and the hedge-sparrow; the lion of the forest and the sightless mole; the proud charger, decked in all the panoply of war ready and eager for the coming fray and the poor down-trodden, spiritless donkey, with scarcely sufficient energy to trundle along a costermonger's barrow.

Some such thoughts were occupying my mind when, with a slight start, my old friend opened his eyes, and perceiving me watching at his bedside, he smiled benignly on me.

"Ah, John," he said, "I have only one great regret, and that is that I cannot be with you a few years longer, in order to mature your mind and disposition for the higher realms of thought; but as this cannot be, give what I am to say the undivided attention of your intellect. I borrow the language, but the words are words of wisdom. 'Let nothing that affects your physical body, or the circumstances in which you are placed, disturb the equilibrium of your mind. Never expect any favours from anybody, but be always ready to assist others to the extent of your ability, and according to the requirements of justice. Never fear anything but to offend the moral law, and you will not suffer. Never hope for any reward, and you will not be disappointed. Never ask for love, sympathy, or gratitude from anybody, but be always ready to bestow them on others. Such things come only when they are not desired. Learn to distinguish and to discriminate between the true and the false, and always act up to your highest ideal of virtue.' These doctrines, my dear John," he continued, "are not new. They have been taught by Buddha, Christ, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mahomed, Plato, Luther, and Shakespeare, and every reformer who had the wisdom to know the right, and had the weal of humanity at heart. To learn them is easy; to realise them is difficult; to adopt them in practical life is divine——."

He ceased speaking; a cloud seemed to pass over his features; the eyelids gave a slight flutter, and the lips trembled——.

So passed from its earthly tabernacle all that was immortal of this good, brave, wise old man.

*(To be continued).*