



**THE BLACK DWARF.**

THE  
LIFE AND ANECDOTES  
OF  
DAVID RITCHIE

THE ORIGINAL OF  
*SIR WALTER SCOTT'S BLACK DWARF*

BY  
WILLIAM CHAMBERS, LL.D.

*Originally Published in 1820*

WILLIAM BROWN  
26 PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH  
1885

This reprint is strictly limited to  
one hundred and fifty copies.

Number *23*  
*MM*

THE  
LIFE AND ANECDOTES  
OF THE  
**BLACK DWARF,**

OR  
**DAVID RITCHIE,**

COMMONLY CALLED "BOWED DAVIE" OF MANOR, PEBBLES-  
SHIRE, THE CELEBRATED ORIGINAL OF THE CHARACTER  
OF ELSHENDER, IN THE

**Tales of my Landlord;**

TOGETHER WITH PART OF  
**A CURIOUS JOURNAL,**

FOUND IN HIS HUT AFTER HIS DECEASE;

COMPRISING ALL THE MOST INTERESTING PASSAGES IN THE LIFE  
OF THAT SINGULAR MISANTHROPE.

*WITH AN ELEGY ON HIS DEATH.*

---

"He was so horrid and so grim,  
"His shadow durst not follow him." POPE.

---

EDINBURGH:

Printed for and sold by W. CHAMBERS, Leith Walk; also sold  
by J. DICK & Co., Edinburgh; WILLIAM REID, Leith;  
R. GRIFFIN & Co., Glasgow; ALEX. ELDER, Peebles; and  
all other Booksellers.

---

1820.



Gen. Lib  
Hist. of the family of  
Samuel A. Jones  
7-19-49

828  
543 b 20  
C 44  
1885

## P R E F A C E .

DR WILLIAM CHAMBERS states in his "Memoirs" that this little volume, one of his earliest efforts, was a commercial success at a time when such success was of great moment to him, and adds that it "has ever since been accepted as an authority."

The reasons of its first favourable reception and of the subsequent popular verdict are not far to seek.

At the time of its appearance, Sir Walter Scott was surprising and delighting the world by his novels, and, as *The Great Unknown*, was arousing no small amount of curiosity and speculation.

The natural desire to know how much of fact lies hidden under the

MM

10-3-49 m.p.

guise of fiction, and to learn whence a great author derives his material and draws his inspiration, was supplemented by the hope, that in the revelation of the *original* of one of his characters, some clue might be found to his own individuality.

This keen curiosity in the public mind the youthful author of *The Life and Anecdotes of the Black Dwarf* was not slow to appreciate and turn to account; but he did more, he went to the task as a labour of love, and one has only to read the brief but graphic sketch to find the cause of its being "ever since accepted as an authority."

It is not merely that it is entertainingly and sympathetically written, but it bears evidence of careful personal investigation, and of a determination to state only the simple facts about a character round whom many foolish stories must have gathered.

By permission of Scott's publishers, an abbreviation of the novel of *The Black Dwarf* was appended to the biography. It has not been thought necessary to reprint it here, but it doubtless added greatly to the interest of the volume, when the novel itself was, owing to its price, not readily accessible to the mass of the community.

The following is the author's original *Introduction* to the biographical portion of his work.

"The Compiler of the following sheets feels diffident, in presenting to the public sketches that have a relation to a Tale so ably handled, and elegantly written, as the tale of THE BLACK DWARF, in the 'TALES OF MY LANDLORD.' Indeed, the singular felicity of manner, displayed in the works of this hitherto unknown author, has shed an inimitable beauty over that species of writing, and caused to arise a new era in literature.

"That the curious might become better acquainted with the Dwarf, is the principal reason



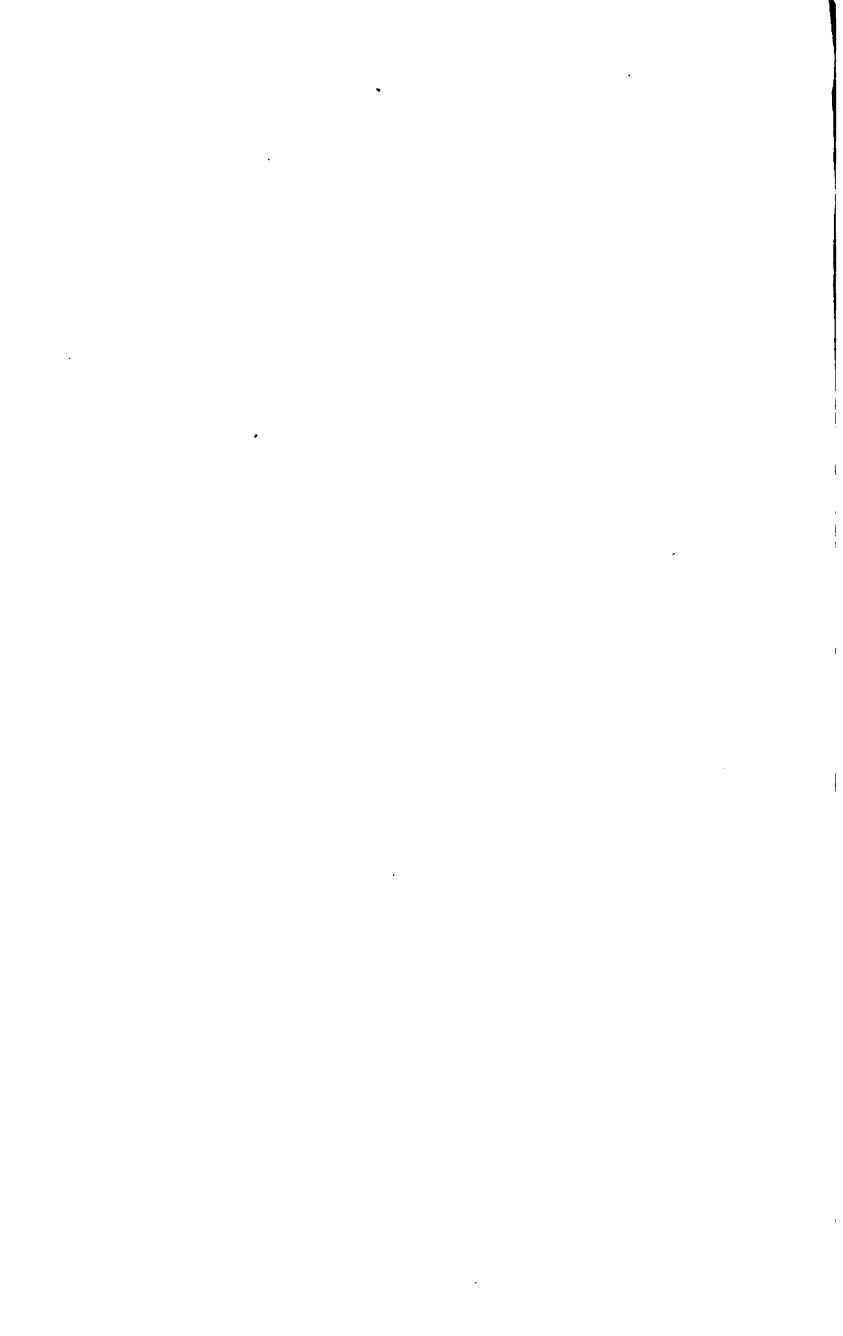
for this publication. Such a work has often been called for, but this is the first which has appeared, and it is hoped it will allay their curiosity at a small expence ; for which purpose it is submitted to the candour of the public, with all due respect and deference.

“Very few who read the ‘Tales of my Landlord,’ could believe that the mysterious Dwarf, pourtrayed with his deep-rooted misanthropy, was actually the creature even of the vigorous and vivid imagination of the writer. But where was he to find a human being agreeing with so nice a description? The Public might have remained in suspense where to seek the Dwarf, had not the *Quarterly Review* mentioned that the original had lived in the parish of Manor, county of Peebles. This intelligence speedily turned the eye of the inquisitive towards that quarter, and very soon recognised in Elshender, the Recluse of Mucklestane Moor, no other than the subject of the following memoir.”

The present publisher thinks it but right to state that he re-issues the little volume with the kind consent of Messrs W. & R. Chambers. He would direct attention to the fact that

the portrait of the Dwarf, reproduced in front, and referred to in detail upon page 24, is an exact facsimile of that which, Dr Chambers informs us, was prepared for his first edition by "a poor but ingenious man, advanced in life, named Peter Fyfe," who, he adds, "although altogether unacquainted with copperplate engraving," executed it "from the descriptions I gave him."

EDINBURGH, *December* 1885.



## LIFE OF DAVID RITCHIE.

**T**HIS eccentric being was a source of amusement and wonder to the neighbouring country while alive, and has excited the curiosity of all those who have read the tale of the Black Dwarf, in the "Tales of my Landlord," since his death. As doubtless, many are desirous of being acquainted with his history, we will conduct them, in as brief a manner as possible, to the sequestered spot where he spent the most part of a long life. The traveller wishing to see his cottage and garden, must, upon leaving Peebles, cross the Tweed, and shortly after ascend a gentle rising hill to the south-west, called Manor Swire. Upon reaching the summit, and looking back on the

scene he has just left, the finest view presents itself, the equal of which is not to be seen in the south of Scotland. On the right are the high hills of Newby, lying next to Selkirkshire, with their dark heath-clad summits towering amidst the clouds. They wind away towards the east; the Tweed dividing them from hills equally precipitous on the opposite side. The only opening in the wild amphitheatre of mountains, is that where the high Venlaw turns towards the south, upon which stands the beautiful seat of Smithfield; at the bottom rolls the Eddlestone water, where it shortly after joins the Tweed. More to the west lie the hills of Niedpath, covered with a few scanty shrubs, the remains of the once famous Niedpath wood. No person unacquainted with the *locale* of this scenery, could perceive that these hills lie on the opposite side of the river; for Manor Swire

seems connected with the corresponding precipice of the Niedpath banks ; till, on stepping forward, there at once bursts into view, a most dreadful separation ; the width is so small, and the declivity so great on both sides, that it is far from being improbable that they had at one time been separated by a grand convulsion of nature. On the opposite brae there dashes, with great rapidity, several mountain torrents, which, with their noise and white foam, presents a fine contrast to the quiet and gloomy shades around. Over these small rivulets is the principal road to the west of Scotland ; at the bottom runs the Tweed, which gracefully winds through the centre of the declivities.

On the top of a very steep rock, partly rising out of the side of the water, stands Niedpath Castle, with its ruinous and grey towers, once a place of great strength and importance, be-

longing to the Earl of Wemyss, but long since left to the ravages of time by its owners; however, there is still sufficient remaining to engage the attention of the passenger; it is shown, and now only inhabited, by an old worthy couple, who point out the various subterraneous dungeons and vaults, some of which even extend so far as the neighbouring burgh. The Tweed runs now in almost a straight line, and about a mile below is Peebles, exactly in the centre of the scene. It is a very pretty, neat, but a dull town.

On the other side of the Swire, runs the Manor water; at the bottom of which, at a short distance, it joins the Tweed; a small bridge crosses it; beyond it is a fine level valley; about a mile on the road stands Manor, with its kirk; at a short distance is Hallyards, long the residence of the venerable Professor Ferguson. Farther on, lies

the farm of Woodhouse; within a hundred yards of which, stands with its back to the road, the Black Dwarf's cottage. Previous to giving a description of it, we will hasten to detail the origin of "Bow'd Davie o' the Wud'use" as he was called; for part of which we are obliged to the Scots and Edinburgh Magazine, and the rest from personal information.

David Ritchie was born at Easter Happrew, in the parish of Stobo, Peeblesshire, about the year 1735. His father, William Ritchie, a labouring man, was employed in the slate quarries at that place, as was also one of his sons, who was older than David. The name of his mother was Annale Niven. David used to say, that his deformity was owing to *ill-guiding* in his childhood; but this was not credited, and he is understood to have been misshapen from his birth. Whether his



peculiar temper arose entirely from this cause, or from original disposition, it appears, at least, to have displayed itself at a very early age; and his father used to observe, "that he was born either to slay, or be slain." He was never more than a few months at school, but he had learned to read English very well. He was sent to Edinburgh, when young, to learn the trade of a brush-maker; but his extraordinary figure attracted so much notice, that he soon left this city in disgust, and retired to his native hills. He now subsisted on charity, and was generally well received among the farmers, probably for the many amusing stories he used to tell; as he never staid above a single night at each farm, his visits were not found troublesome. In one of his peregrinations, he happened to stop for a night at a farmhouse, about a mile west from Peebles;

previous to going to bed, Davie disappeared most miraculously—was not to be seen—every part was searched ineffectually; the people began to be alarmed, as they knew it was impossible he could crawl away unnoticed. After their surprise had subsided, and about to “tak’ the beuks,” they heard from the huge chimney which overhung the fire on the hearth, in the middle of the floor, the most horrid cries and yells; upon looking up, to the no small surprise of the farmer and his family, Davie was seen perched on the *ranle-tree*, a wooden bar across, at least 20 feet high. How he got himself seated there undiscovered, must for ever remain a mystery; it was supposed he had “set his foot in the black crook shell, and up the lum flew he.” His only excuse for this trick was, “that he wanted to gi’e them a fleg.”

This anecdote proves, that although

his legs were almost invisible, he was still very dexterous and agile in climbing. Another time, at the same place, he has been seen to stand erect on his head, on the mouth of a mutchkin bottle, which stood, or was placed, on the very top of the barn. These rude qualifications, while he was still young, made him both feared and wondered at. Some years after, when both his parents were dead, he attracted the notice of Sir James Nasmyth; and being now settled in the parish of Manor, he formed the plan of erecting a cottage for himself on the grounds of that gentleman, whose permission he seemed readily to have obtained. He fixed upon the spot of ground we have already mentioned, at the bottom of a steep hill on the farm of Woodhouse.

The benevolent proprietor directed his servants to lend him what assistance he might require, and gave him posses-

sion of the ground rent-free. The Dwarf required but little assistance. With incredible labour and perseverance, he cleared the space to be occupied for his hut and a small garden. The cottage was remarkable for the lowness of the door, which was made proportionable to the size of the inhabitant. The garden was contiguous to the cottage, enclosed with a high wall. Both were built of large stones which he rolled from the hill above, and lifted by himself; though without mortar, they were very solid, and were composed of alternate layers of turf and stones. Having covered the hut with a neat thatch roof, he constructed a few rude pieces of furniture; a bed, a table, and a chair, were built of turf, and produced grass as green as the expanse before his door. He next proceeded to the cultivation of his garden, in which he displayed considerable taste,

as well as industry. In a short time he stocked it with a few fruit trees, and with all sorts of flowers, herbs, and culinary vegetables which could be procured in the neighbourhood. It was, in fact, the richest garden for verdure and beauty which the surrounding country could display. His manner of working is described by persons who used to visit him, as exceedingly laborious. Being unable to make any use of his feet in digging, he had a spade so contrived, that he could force it down with his breast; the rest of the labour was performed entirely by means of his arms and hands, in which he possessed great strength. He also procured some bee-hives, and planted a bower of willows and rowan tree; and by degrees his little hermitage exhibited a very striking contrast to the slovenly kail-yards of the neighbouring peasants, and looked more like a fairy bower than a

wizard's den. It soon came to be resorted to by visitors, being accounted, with its inhabitant, one of the most surprising curiosities of the country. The late Dr Adam Ferguson, who resided in the neighbourhood, used sometimes to visit Davie, as an amusement in that retired spot ; but I never heard that anything remarkable occurred on these occasions. Mr Walter Scott was also a frequent visitor, and was said to have held long communings with him ; likewise several other individuals of literary celebrity. The cultivating and ornamenting this little spot, formed his chief occupation and greatest pleasure. He reared a great profusion of flowers for his more elegant visitors, and chamomile, rhubarb, and other medicinal herbs, for his homely neighbours.

He also supplied the tables of some gentlemen in the neighbourhood with honey. His bees, along with a dog

and cat, of all which he was very fond, formed the whole of his live-stock. This original cottage falling into disrepair, Sir James Nasmyth ordered a new one, consisting of two separate dwellings under one roof, to be erected for him and his sister, in 1802, at a short distance from the former. This was constructed by masons under Davie's directions; but he built the new garden wall almost entirely with his own hands. His sister wished to have one outer door common to both apartments; but he insisted on having two separate ones, as they appear at present (see frontispiece.) The house was, accordingly, divided by a complete partition. Davie's door is about three feet and a half high, and he could stand upright below the lintel. It has a small chink for a window, with wooden shutters, from which (as it is said in the tale) he could see every one

who approached, without the possibility of being seen himself. He would not admit of glass in it. Mr Ballantyne, the present farmer of Woodhouse, enlarged the garden at the same time; which addition it took Davie a whole year to put in order to his liking. He turned up the soil two feet and a half deep, clearing it of large stones, &c.

His sister and he having frequently quarrelled, a sort of estrangement took place between these two lonely beings. The sister, though no way deformed in her person, was never capable of regular employment, from a degree of mental aberration. They were long the only persons in the parish who received support from the poor's funds. The Dwarf, however, derived the most part of his subsistence from the gratuitous contributions of the neighbouring farmers and gentry, whom he occasionally visited, staying sometimes two,



three, or even four weeks, just according as he was well or ill received, counting it no small honour conferred, by giving them the favour of his company. He made one round every summer, and another every year about Christmas; never coming back before he had had a month's jaunting or crawling about the country among the farmers. The first place he made a call at was Barns, contriving to land there on Christmas day, when, in his own words, "there was aye something gaun."

That this was the case, we have the following memorandum of his expedition, in his own hand-writing, which, by appearance, cannot be less than 40 years old; it was discovered upon looking over Davie's books after his decease, and dropt from his old quarto bible. It is curious, as being the only relict of his *composition*.

“Dec. 25.—Was ower at Barns; the auld laird ga’e me a shilling. Mem. Although he does na read the bible sae muckle as he should do, deevil a bit but he’s the best o’ them a’. It’s true, the lady got me into the kitchen, and ga’e me some bits o’ scraps, an’ an ounce o’ bacca an’ guid black rappee. But then the servants mak’ sic a gigglin’, there’s nae pleasure in gi’en them my company; I could pour seethen lead down their throats! Just as I cam’ out to gang away, forret comes auld cripple Tam Anderson, the travellin’ book-seller; the laird gaed forret to his auld white aiver, and looked into his creels, an’ said to Tam “What kind o’ books d’ye sell, sirrah?” ‘History and divinity, sir,’ quo’ Tam. ‘Divinity!’ quo’ the laird, ‘who the devil ever buys divinity from you, sirrah?’ ‘Deed sir,’ says Tam, ‘I hardly ever sell ony other thing; they’re the maist

salerife anes I have in my hail pack, sick as thae guid auld worthies, Eesack Ambrose, Naphtali, or the warstlin' of the church o' God, Bouston on the saurement, Asskin's gospel sonnets, the marrow o' modern divinity, draps o' comfort, the afflicted man, travels through godliness, apples o' gold and crabs o' sin, grapes in the wilderness, and mair than a', the pilgrim, by that gude christian, John Bunyan the tinkler. And now, laird, if ye want a gude copy o' Eesack Ambrose's first, middle, and last o' things, to which is added, hell's horror and heeven's happiness, ye needna gang farther than my creel here; here's as guid a copy as ye'll get in that place they ca' Embrugh; where, they say, they sell buiks afore their door, the lazy loons, and no to gang about the country wi' them, as I do; deil be in their paught (that I should say sae). Here's your mark, laird, just twa pund

and thretty pennies Scots cuinzie. Ou dinna mak' ony matter about wanting change; I'm just gaun up to Quothquan, to see the young folk that were buckled last Fuirsdays 't een; I'll be back again by Saturday; they'll be wantin', at least, a bit bible and the psalms for the bride; I'll get the change then, laird, I can get the cuinzie then.' The laird could keep in nae langer, but burst out wi' the awfuest imprecations I ever heard,—'heaven's horror and hell's happiness,' quoth he, 'get out o' the court ye d—d auld drivelling fule, or, by God, I'll get out Stewart Wilson, to put a dizzen o' lead slugs in your coat tail, that will put mettle in your heels, in twae senses o' the word.'

"This was grand fun for me, to see Tam hirplin' away out o' the court, drawin' and pu'in' his auld white aiver after him, thinking, nae doubt, it was a

horrid blupe. After he was away, the laird turned about to me, and burst out wi' a great guffaw, and cried, 'draps o' comfort;' 'the auld donard deevil; faith Stewart Wilson's lead draps wad been draps o' nae great comfort to him, ha! ha! ha!' 'afflicted man's companion!' 'gude faith, David, he wad needed that buik himself; Stewart wad hae afflicted him sair eneugh, if he had planted some grape shot in the wilderness of his posteriors, ha! ha! ha!'

"Next day was at Newby, where stayed aye of my best friends, the gude-wife Mrs Gibson; I may say she was the kindest friend ever ony body had. Deevil a bit, if I dinna think there could be less than thretty gypsies, woo' netties, and other clamjamfray, sittin' round the ingle haverin'. Some o' their gets leugh at me, but, my faith, if I didna clear their een to them. Odd, it's the queerest thing that ever I

saw, how any person can allow siccan creatures to get quarters, or harbour them; for my part, I could na brook ava to sit among them. If such deevils were comin' about my house, I would see them blawn a' bits by some slugs frae my auld rusty gun, afore I would lift the sneck to them, or sic like trash. Held my Hogmanay here. Willy Mitchell, Robbie Ballantyne, and twa three other farmers ga'e us some fine sangs; I wad hae done the same, but it wad ha'e been ill my part to waste my lungs on them.

“Came in by Hundlesoup, and gaed to Peebles on Hansel Monenday, to see James Ritchie, my friend the piper, and some mae. Saw him; he had been getting mony a hansel, and had been tastin'. Renewed the auld controversy about the earth gaun round,—he was clean against it,—I was for't. He spak muckle to the purpose, but I

spak mair. 'Hoot,' says I, 'James, ye're clean wrang, think a wee.' 'Faith, deel a bit,' says he, 'I've lived here this five and fiefy year, and Bigiesnow's neither up nor down, back nor forret, sin' I cam' til't.' I could mak' naething o' him, sae left him to settle accounts wi' the whisky bottle. He was aye clear for it gaun round, at ony rate. Was followed by some damned brush, as if I had been a world's wonder,—could pour seething lead down through them. Hell 'll never be fu' till they're in't. Mony ane got the length of my kent. Got a horrid affront and came hame.

"Tuesday, was at Glenrath, stayed two days and gaed ower to Hasselsykes; they wanted me to stay to shoot some evil spirits, or a ghaist, that appeared every night, and maist feared every ane o' them out o' their wits. At the gloamen they loaded their gun, and

ga'e it to me. 'Gi'e me the gun,' says I, 'I'se shoot him, though he should be the deevil himsel'. I'se cove him, I trow. I'se weize a brace o' bullets through his infernal guts; and if I canna do that, I'll run him through wi' a hay fork.' "

Here Davie ends abruptly, leaving us quite in the dark, with regard to the shooting of the ghost: which we are sorry we cannot give in his own unique style. This important matter might have rested here, had not a certain person favoured us with the result; and it shows pretty clearly the motives that induced him to keep quiet upon such a wonderful incident.

The farmer and his family, at the place Davie mentions, had been frequently dunned with his vaunting, that he was not afraid to face all the infernal legions. They were determined to try him, so that night one went out in a



sheet. The farmer double loaded the piece, and presented it to Davie, who received it with a grin, which showed he was not altogether prepared for spiritual warfare. Marching out, he soon encountered the apparition, but what with his extraordinary trepidation, the more than double charge, &c., he was, by the recoil of the piece, blown, or tumbled, at least 20 feet backwards. Davie was so discomfited with the unfortunate issue of the affair, that he slunk away, blustering and swearing in his usual blasphemous language, that the slugs had recoiled from the "infernal worm-eaten ribs of the accursed worricow."

Whether he ever suspected the trick, is not known, but it is certain, that he never was entirely on friendly terms with them after; testifying his abhorrence by never afterwards staying with them a month, which he accounted an extraordinary stretch of generosity.

From these expeditions, he brought home almost as much provant as he could carry, consisting principally of cheese and short-bread; never taking a homely offering, scorning the hand which dared to offer what might have been given to a common mendicant; he received these donations so frequently and so easily, that in process of time, he considered them rather as his lawful right than as a favour bestowed.

Independent of these plentiful supplies, Davie's *meal-pock* also hung constantly in the mill, and every person who had a *melder* ground, allotted a small portion of it for his use. These resources, together with occasional presents from strangers who visited his dwelling, and the vegetables which he produced by his horticulture, sufficed for all his little wants. The pecuniary donations he received were chiefly expended on snuff, which was almost his

only luxury, and one in which he indulged to excess. He kept a whisky bottle, too, and occasionally sold a little for some years; which was a good pretence for many to call, who could not be otherwise introduced to him, but he was never known to be too free in the use of it himself.

The frontispiece is an exact representation of Davie, in his usual dress of home-spun wool, which he received gratuitously every year. Those who were personally acquainted with him, allow, that the likeness and the figure are very striking; it is copied from an original drawing, by an ingenious artist. In the background is seen his cottage, as it stands at present, with two doors and windows for himself and his sister. The stone or turf seat where he gave audience are likewise marked. The description given of him in the tale, is so correct, that we do not hesitate to

insert it. "His body, thick and square, like that of a man of middle size, was mounted upon two large feet; but nature seemed to have forgotten the legs and the thighs, or they were so very short as to be hidden by the dress which he wore. His arms were long and brawny, furnished with two muscular hands, and, when uncovered in the eagerness of his labour, were shagged with coarse black hair. It seemed as if nature had originally intended the separate parts of his body to be the members of a giant, but had afterwards capriciously assigned them to the person of a dwarf; so ill did the length of his arms, and the iron strength of his frame, correspond with the shortness of his stature."

His height was about three feet and a half. His skull, which was of an oblong and rather unusual shape, was of such strength, that he could strike

it with ease through the pannel of a door, or the end of a tar-barrel. His laugh is said to have been quite horrible; and his screech-owl voice, shrill, uncouth, and dissonant, corresponded well with his other peculiarities. Although he was so horrid and ugly, his eyes were deep, sunk, and of a piercing black, but were said to have been fine.

There was nothing very uncommon about his dress. He usually wore an old slouched hat when he went abroad; and when at home, a sort of cowl, such as he is represented with in the plate. He never wore shoes, being unable to adapt them to his mis-shapen fin-like feet, but always had both feet and legs quite concealed, and wrapped up with pieces of cloth. He always walked with a sort of pole or pikestaff considerably taller than himself.

His habits were, in many respects

singular, and indicated a mind sufficiently congenial to its uncouth tabernacle. A jealous, misanthropical, and irritable temper, was his most prominent characteristic. The sense of his deformity haunted him like a phantom; and the insults and scorn to which this exposed him, had poisoned his heart with fierce and bitter feelings, which, from other traits in his character, do not appear to have been more largely infused into his original temperament than that of his fellow-men. He detested children, on account of their propensity to insult and persecute him. To strangers he was generally reserved, crabbed, and surly; and though he by no means refused assistance or charity, he, on many occasions, neither expressed or exhibited much gratitude. Even towards persons who had been his greatest benefactors, and who possessed the greatest share of his

good will, he frequently displayed much caprice and jealousy. A lady, who knew him from his infancy, says, that although Davie showed as much respect and attachment to her father's family, as it was in his nature to show to any, yet they were always obliged to be very cautious in their deportment towards him. One day having gone to visit him with another lady, he took them through his garden, and was showing them, with much pride and good humour, all his rich and tastefully assorted borders, when they happened to stop near a plot of cabbages, which had been somewhat injured by the caterpillars. Davie observing one of the ladies smile, instantly assumed his savage scowling aspect, rushed among the cabbages, and dashed them to pieces with his *kent*, exclaiming, "I hate the worms, for they mock me."

Another lady, likewise a friend and

old acquaintance of his, very unintentionally gave him mortal offence on a similar occasion. Throwing back his jealous glance, he fancied he saw her spit at him, "Am I a toad, woman! that ye spit at me—that ye spit at me!" he exclaimed with fury; and without listening to any answer, he drove her out of his garden with imprecations and insult. When irritated by persons for whom he entertained little respect, his misanthropy displayed itself in words, and sometimes actions of still greater rudeness. He would utter the most shocking imprecations, swear he would "cleave them to the *barn-pans*"—"if he had but his *cran fingers* on them," &c.

A farmer in the neighbourhood went one night, out of a frolic, to frighten Davie, but paid pretty dearly for his joke. He had assumed the character of a robber, and pretended to be break-



ing into his hut. The Dwarf, after reconnoitering him from a small unglazed window, which he had near his chimney, wrenched a large stone out of the wall, dashed it upon the assailant, and knocked him to the ground, where he lay for a while senseless, and very severely hurt.

The following illustrates the resolute and dogged disposition of the Dwarf. He had applied to Mr Laidlaw of Hallyards, for the branch of a tree, which grew in the neighbourhood, to serve some purpose of his own. Mr Laidlaw was always very ready to oblige Davie, but told him, that, on the present occasion, he could not grant his request, as it would injure the tree. Davie made no reply, but went away grumbling to himself. Next morning, some of Mr Laidlaw's servants happened to be going from home as early as two o'clock, when, to their surprise

and terror, they perceived through the grey twilight, a strange figure struggling and dancing in the air below the said tree. Upon going up to the place they found it was Davie, who had contrived by some means to fasten a rope to the branch he wanted, and was swinging with all his weight upon it to break it down. They left him, and before he was again disturbed, he succeeded in bringing it to the ground, and carried it home with him.

Although Davie had a house of his own, always provided with plenty of provant, he was not over-fond of total seclusion. In his summer excursions, Davie made a point of staying two or three weeks at one of his favourite haunts, Newby,\* a sheep farm, about

\* It was on this farm where the following instance of sagacity of the shepherd's dog happened.

When the man intended to steal away sheep,

three miles south from Peebles, and about a mile and a half from his cottage; it was, as he relates in his memorandum, where he spent his hogmanay. However great a favourite Davie might be

he did not do it himself, but detached his dog to do it for him. With this view, under pretext of looking at the sheep with the intention to purchase them, he went through the flock with the dog at his heels, to whom he secretly gave a signal, so as to let him know the individuals he wanted, to the number of ten or twenty. He then went away, and at the distance of several miles sent back the dog by himself in the night time, who selected the individual sheep that had been pointed out to him, separated them from the flock, and drove them before him till he overtook his master.

After the demise of Yarrow's master, who was executed, he was sold to a farmer near Edinburgh; still he could not overcome the propensities of a bad education, bringing him sometimes into imminent danger, by continuing to steal sheep; so seeing that poor Yarrow's morals were too much corrupted, he was hanged in the same manner, but with less ceremony than his old preceptor.

with the gudewife, Mrs Gibson (one of the most hospitable women in all the county of Tweedale), once he there got, as he called it, a horrid blupe. Happening to go when the house was taken up by more gentle visitors, and the bed which was constantly given to him in one of the rooms pre-occupied, he was given to understand he must take up his quarters all night in the *bay-loft*. This was a death-stroke to his vanity; but as there was no resource, he went away seemingly to bed grumbling. Next morning, ere the sun had scarcely risen, a servant going to ewe-milking, saw, through the gloom, the most unusual appearance in the clift of an old high apple tree in Hayston orchard; venturing forward, and hailing the strange animal, to her no small surprise, in a minute the Black Dwarf stood before her, in all his natural deformity. Upon inquiring how he

came there at such an early hour, he swore that he had slept there all night ; that he preferred it to all her mistress's stable beds, and that he would not bear such conduct. Upon going back to breakfast, as there was no apology made, he appeared very much chagrined, for which he beat a speedy retreat, and I believe never totally forgot their indifference.

However diminutive Davie appeared, his strength was almost supernatural ; if he had been set down on the ground, he could wrestle and hold the strongest and tallest man in the country.

Near his cottage there were some large trees to be dug up, one of which occupied two men for two days constant picking and undermining. The Dwarf happening to pass by, saw, and taunted them with their weakness, telling them with his usual acrimony, that he would do in two minutes what had

“ta'en siccan twae whaesal-blawn creatures twae days to do without effect.” Then setting his bull-like head and shoulders to the bottom of the tree, gave it a push of so tremendous a force, as fairly rooted it up from the foundation, to the astonishment of the men, who stared, thinking he was possessed of the powers of a giant. Davie marched off with all the dignity of having done a great action, muttering, “Brush o' Babel, do that an ye can.” The above shows that the Black Dwarf's corporeal powers were not entirely contemptible.

In his memorandums before quoted, he mentions having received a horrid affront, which caused him to come home. By strict investigation, I am enabled to tell what the affront was. When he came to Peebles, his beard had been suffered to grow to an enormous length, and to get the operation of shaving

performed, was often one of his principal reasons for travelling. There dwelt in that town a barber,

“A fellow of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy,”

a man who had wherewithal a great genius for fun and jokes; he was constantly engaged in some waggish trick or other; and made it his business to know every person's affairs better than themselves. In short, at that time, when newspapers were not so plenty, he was the living chronicle of the place. To this noted character, the grim-looking Dwarf applied for the news; and at the same time got a touch of his office, to clear his nut-cracking chin of its grisly coat; but, on the present occasion, the barber (whether he had been drinking too freely, being Hansel Monday, or not, I will not pretend to determine), thinking, no doubt, that shaving a beard of two months' growth, for the usual penny, was an affront to

the good deacons and burgesses of the town whose hebdomal excrescences he was in the habit of erazing for the same allowance, took vengeance on poor Davie's beard, by only shaving the one-half, and leaving the rest in all the majesty of ten weeks' growth. The Dwarf did not discover the trick, till he was followed and hooted by the mischievous boys, which perfectly enraged him, and wrought him up to the most dreadful pitch of madness. He uttered the most horrid imprecations against the barber, swearing that he could cleave him to the *barn-pans*. It was this accident which set the Dwarf home in such high dudgeon, and in all the furor of misanthropy.

He had a sort of strange pleasure in wandering out in the dark, and is said to have sometimes spent whole nights among the ruins of old buildings, and other places where spectres were be-



lieved to haunt ; and he used to vaunt much of his courage and intrepidity in these adventures. With all his bravery, he is known to have been extremely superstitious ; and to protect himself from witchcraft, he had planted a great deal of the rowan tree, or mountain ash, around his dwelling ; upwards of forty of these trees were cut down in his garden after his death. It does not appear that he made any pretensions to warlockry ; or that there was any strong suspicion of that nature respecting him among his neighbours, although a knowledge of his revengeful disposition impressed both young and old with a certain degree of fearful respect and awe for him. Davie spent much of his time in solitude, and when his garden did not require his care, would lie whole summer days by the side of a well, poring into the water. He also read a good deal when he could get

books; and what is very remarkable, was very fond of some parts of Shenstone's pastoral ballads, which he could repeat by heart. The sort of reading, however, in which he took greatest delight, was the adventures of Wallace and Bruce, and other popular tracts about Scottish heroes, the Highland clans, &c. He possessed a copy of "Hervey's Meditations," Milton's "Paradise Lost," some parts of which he read with much interest. He had also got hold of a copy of "Tooke's Pantheon;" and had his head confusedly stored with the stories of the heathen mythology. His information, such as it was, appeared to great advantage, when he mingled with the peasantry at the mill or the smithy. He was very satirical in his conversation; and his harsh croaking voice was there frequently heard much higher than the sound of the clapper or the fore-hammer.

The only time Davie was suspected of using warlockry to accomplish his ends, was on the following occasion:— Mr G——, a neighbouring farmer, once on a visit at his cottage, gave him mortal offence by throwing out some rude sarcasms on his personal deformity; although intended as a mere joke, they were not relished nor understood in that light by the enraged Dwarf, who vowed to be revenged on him at a future opportunity. Happening to pass by the front of the farmer's house, when he knew that his victim was employed behind it, he seized a large stone (the size may be guessed from the fatal consequences), and flung it with a wonderful force over the house, and by a singular fatality, it fell on the head of the unfortunate rustic, severely fractured his skull (which was none of the thinnest), and almost killed him on the spot. But contrary to what might

have been expected, it was not the immediate cause of his death, though it ultimately led to that catastrophe, as he never afterwards recovered from the effects of the blow.

It cannot be certified that the stone was thrown with a deliberate intention to kill, but we should rather suppose it to have been done from the unresolved impulse of the moment. However, it clearly illustrates the determined purpose of revenge, which he entertained against his enemies, and the possession of a mind that could not be shaken from its resolve, even to accomplish a vengeance, at the extent of which human nature shudders.

He was supposed to entertain some very peculiar notions on religious subjects; but those who were intimate with him, say, that he would now and then speak concerning a future state with great earnestness and good sense;

and on such occasions, when his feelings were excited, would sometimes burst into tears; but I believe it may be assumed that he was never much remarked for his intellectual superiority.

Davie would rather appear to have had some ambition of posthumous honours; perhaps "Tooke's Pantheon" might have inspired him with a thirst of immortality; or perchance, he had some presentiment of his approaching apotheosis, under the plastic hands of a mighty magician—a still more extraordinary and mysterious personage than himself,—one who has not only raised up the spirits of the departed, but, by disrobing them of the more vulgar and *prosaic* rags of their mortal state, and investing them with imposing and poetical qualities, has restored them to the world in a guise a thousand times more pleasing and picturesque, and yet scarcely less true to nature than the

reality itself. But whether poor Davie possessed the second sight or not, it is certain that he long expressed a desire to be buried on a particular spot, which he pointed out, and not in the churchyard among the "*common brush*," as he expressed it. One of the motives assigned for this singular wish, was his aversion to have the clods clapped down upon him "by such a fellow as Jock Somerville the *bellman*." This person he always detested, and would scarcely stay in his company; probably from a secret feeling of disgust, or disagreeable reminiscence, suggested by a certain resemblance which the grave-digger bore to himself in personal deformity.

He appears to have displayed no small portion of taste in the selection of his burying ground; it was on the top of the hill which arose abruptly at the back of his house. It is described, in a little tract, as a "beautiful mount

called the Woodhill, which rises from a plain, nearly in the centre of the parish of Manor; skirted with a number of venerable old trees, and encircled by an amphitheatre of steep and lofty mountains, covered to the tops with heath, and having their sides broken and diversified by deep ravines and rocky precipices. This picturesque little hill, rising in the middle of a delightful plain, with its deep green ferny summit, crowned with a druidical circle, and its declivities white with sheep; the silvery links of Manor water, winding nearly at its base, through fertile haughs and fields of grain; the aged trees scattered here and there along the bottom of the precipitous hills, the wild abode of the goat, the raven, and the falcon; and the dark summits of the farther mountains towering over all, — present a burst of upland scenery, not unworthy

of arresting the notice of the traveller, even although it had never possessed the additional attraction of having been the residence of the illustrious Ferguson, as well as of the eccentric Dwarf of Manor Water."\*

The eccentric Dwarf, as the same writer states, also requested that a clump of rowan tree might be planted above his grave on the Woodhill; probably meant to keep off all kinds of malignant demons or evil spirits from

\* A short account of David Ritchie, with an elegy on his death, printed for the author, July 1816. "This is curious, as having been in print some little time before the 'Tales of my Landlord' appeared. But it was never published, and the author, whom we have conversed with, does not imagine that any of the few copies which he privately distributed, could possibly have found their way to the hands of either Peter Pattieson, or his learned and worthy patron, the Schoolmaster of Gandercleuch."—*Note to the Scots Magazine.*



...unallowed

...ation to

...ted more

... De-

...ree

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

than Davie by some years, has become a good deal more deranged in her mind since his death. She never passes the night in the cottage, but resides there through the day, and sleeps at the farmer's, Mr Ballantyne of Woodhouse. Of late, a great many strangers call at the cottage, from whom she has received many charitable offerings. She cannot understand their great curiosity concerning her brother's history. She said to one who visited the place;—  
“What gars folk speer sae mony questions about us? Our parents were mean, but there was nae ill anent them.”

Thus we have brought to a conclusion the life of the Black Dwarf. Every anecdote which was considered interesting, or which could elucidate the deep-rooted misanthropy which rankled in his bosom, has been inserted. There is no doubt, that many absurdi-

ties might have passed off as truths, and been believed, however improbable; but independent of this being below the dignity of a biographer, it could serve no end, except bringing both the memory of Davie, and the recorder of his humble name, into just and merited contempt. Therefore they have been rejected, as the compiler considered it better to let them sink into oblivion, than recal the weak and futile shadows of a shadow. We have nothing further to add, except the following elegy on his death, which has been written expressly for this work, and kindly contributed by a young amateur. It will, we hope, be found not wholly devoid of merit.

## ELEGY.

## I.

YE mournful shepherds, by the silent wave,  
 Which glides along sweet Manor's lowly vale,  
 Where now the sighing winds of sorrow rave,  
 Arouse, and hear the accents of my tale,  
 Which sounds, alas! too deep of woe and wail!  
 My sorrow bids me tell, with many a moan,  
 Which haply loads the winter's midnight gale,  
 That he, the friend and the companion's gone,  
 Who often cheer'd the farmers' ev'ning fire, alone!

## II.

The gudewife *canny*, who the number'd day  
 Expected, when he'd grace her couth fireside;  
 And chatter all the night with tales away,  
 And stories of misanthropy and pride;  
 And punish all the bairns who might deride  
 His shapeless person, or his shanning chin;  
 While she would fleech the offended guest to  
*bide,*  
 And that she'd lick the ill-bred bairns's  
 skins,—  
 No more she Davie shall receive her house within!

## III.

The gash grey farmer, who at Hallow-eve,  
Expected him to grace his revels keen ;  
No more the wish'd-for visit shall receive,  
But point the seat where Davie should have  
been.  
Weep, all ye herds, in Manor's fairy glen ;  
The wond'rous wight, who dwelt in your  
low vale,  
Has gone at last the way of other men,  
And all he left is sorrow, woe and wail ;  
Alas ! that I survive to tell the mournful tale !

## IV.

No more at sunset, on his turf-built seat,  
Shall Davie sit ;—in front his verdant green,  
When village boys, with many a wrestling feat,  
Oft tried to catch th' *auld world body's* een,  
And watch his looks with eagerness, between,  
And court the approbation of his smile ;  
While he upon his divot-bank would lean,  
And deal around his glances all the while,  
With various sternness ;—thus, whole hours he  
would beguile.

## V.

No more to neighbouring Peebles, 'clep'd the  
town,  
Shall Davie bend his solitary way,  
Pushing along the hill, as rolling down,  
A mass unshapen, clad in hodden grey ;  
Scarcely distinguish'd at the close of day,  
To be a human creature—or a sprite,  
Gone, with unearthly lin'aments, astray,  
From its damn'd den, to blast the human  
sight,  
Or on this world to wreck the rage of Satan's  
might.

## VI.

Of such a shape was this most wond'rous wight,  
(Another like him shall we never see,)  
Although in person like a bird of night,  
Yet far, far better qualities had he ;  
And though of dire and great misanthropy,  
He wrought no ill but to himself alone ;  
What power could sooth his ruffled mind to be  
Like other works which Nature calls her  
own ;—  
For he did seem her outcast, on the universe  
thrown !

## VII.

How could the hatred of his bosom feel  
 The darling fondle of affection's tie?  
 How could the poison in his heart of steel,  
 Experience ought of human sympathy,  
 Or other passion than misanthropy,  
 To beings of the hated human race,  
 Who fed him only with their mockery,  
 And heap'd upon his head the dire disgrace  
 Of pointing at his foul and bitter ugliness?

## VIII.

Oft in his fairy garden, and his bower,  
 With Nature's other works, would he solace  
 The tedium of a solitary hour:  
 The flowers ne'er mock'd his want of human  
 grace;  
 The rose would blush as sweetly in *his* face,  
 As in the gaze of beauty's bashful charm;  
 Nor would the tendril, which his hand might  
 place  
 Upon the wall, suspect a secret harm,  
 (As would a fellow-mortal,) from his helping arm.

## IX.

How sweet, how blooming was that fairy spot!—  
 A planet in a wilderness of air,

Which, at the noon of midnight, twinkleth not,  
Shining so bright and wonderfully fair,  
A ray of hope through clouds of dark despair;—  
And all around it hills on hills were piled;  
Cleaving the sky their tops shot bleak and bare,  
With all the scenery of a northern wild,  
While Davie's bower an Asiatic Eden smil'd!

## X.

A high magician,\* by a witching spell,  
The lowly rags of grov'ling dust withdrew;  
And as the picture from his pencil fell,  
Exposed his finer, better nature true;  
A burst of grandeur on our vision flew,  
The grosser feelings of his form, refin'd,  
Swept, like a fleeting vision, from our view,  
Left nought but purer majesty behind,  
With all the splendour of misanthropy combin'd.

## XI.

Then 'tis not to be mourn'd by you, ye swains,  
That the secluded ragged hermit fell;  
Since in the Black Recluse's magic strains,  
The finer nature of the Dwarf lives still.

\* The Author of the "Black Dwarf."



Though he is absent from the Woodhouse hill,  
 Yet still he lives, (and he shall live for aye,)  
 In vivid portraiture, and the unknown's spell;  
 And having shaken off his native clay,  
 Th' immortal Dwarf soars on the wings of splendid day!

### EPITAPH.

HERE lies the wond'rous Dwarf of Manor's  
 glen,  
 Transfix'd at last with Death's all-lev'ling  
 dart;  
 In *death* alone was he like other men,  
 In life he always bore a diff'rent part;—  
 Light lies the turf upon the wither'd heart,  
 Which never felt the balm of sympathy;  
 A creature of another kind, a start  
 From Nature's chain, whose dire misanthropy  
 Found only refuge, when it found that bliss,—  
*to die!*