

**“ DAFT HARRY,”**

**BLAIRGOWRIE.**



**AN OLD  
BLAIRGOWRIE  
CHARACTER.**

## XIV.

### “DAFT HARRY,”

#### BLAIRGOWRIE.

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Some things are of that nature as to make  
One's fancy merry while his heart doth ache. — BUNYAN.

Praisers of old times seem to have lost a grand chance in neglecting to show that even “daft fowk” are not so good nowadays as they used to be. This is a serious charge, affecting as it does, according to Carlyle, the character of practically the whole community; but, after all, every one is quite ready to admit, if that will do any good, that there are no fools like old fools, and there the matter may be allowed to remain. “Daft Harry” appeared under the old system, and was one of the most interesting “characters” known to the district. His proper name was Henry M‘Intosh, but he never got anything but “Harry” — always pronounced “Harey.” His father, William M‘Intosh, was a shoemaker with a bit croft at the clachan of Tamannat, which stood on the braes above Kinloch, about two miles west from Blairgowrie, at the beginning of last century, but has long since disappeared. Misfortunes overtook the shoemaker and his wife, Martha, and the couple resolved to come into Rattray — fate ordaining that on the very day of removal (Martinmas, 1799) Harry

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## Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

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should be born on arrival at their new home. He grew up to be a strong, healthy boy, but of weak intellect, and all attempts to teach him failed. He was sent to school, but when he began to knock down his fellow-scholars with the thick wooden board on which it had been found necessary to paint the alphabet for his use, he got his leaving certificate prompt, and the school knew him no more. Both his parents died before he reached manhood, and Harry was thenceforth, to the end of his life, dependent for the comforts of home upon the affectionate and never-failing ministrations of his sister, Mary—a quiet, patient, faithful creature—and Harry, in turn, was devoted to his sister. Possessing a strong physique, our friend found frequent employment with “Whorlie” Butter, whose turning-shop was behind where Mr Grant, chemist, has his premises now.

### THERE HE “PECH'D” AWAY

at the big fly-wheel, which he turned with a crank, and which was used to operate a drill for boring bobbins. He sometimes assisted “Andra” Robertson, also, in the same place at the cross-cut saw, and was completely under his control. His confidence in his friend was so absolute that he would even entrust him with his purse at times when afraid he might lose it. Leading characteristics of Harry were honesty, truthfulness, and reliability; the absence of anything mean or underhand about him, his dislike of the mischievous and vicious, and his instinctive avoidance, even in his begging rounds, of people not generally regarded as respectable. Speaking of begging; that was a great business with our friend, who had set days on which he made his rounds, generally provided with two “scran bags”

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—one for bread and the other for bones and table scraps. These commodious receptacles failing, there were always his capacious pockets to fall back upon for the surplus, and hence the origin of one of the boys’ pet names—“Greasy Pouches!” And those boys—they were

### THE PLAGUE OF HIS LIFE.

Mary generally planned to get him off on his “foraging expeditions” when the school was in; but there never failed to be one or two of the little wretches about to yell names at him from street corners and other vantage points, and he was always certain to give chase, and the chances were that he was hindered till the “schule scaled,” and a couple of hundred or so of his tormentors were dancing all around him, shouting “Wheel! Wheel!” “Greasy Pouches!” “Scoonge!” “Burgess! Burgess!” till he was in a perfect frenzy. With his old “tile” hat on the back of his head—that is, if the boys had not knocked it off!—his red scarf flying in the wind, and the two bags in his hands walloping about him right and left, he would dash hither and thither in the vain endeavour to capture some of the young demons, only to add to their sport and increase the hubbub, which sort of thing would go on till some kind-hearted neighbours or passers-by interfered, or old “Posty,” the solitary town officer, appeared on the scene. Touching poor Harry’s nicknames—“Wheel!” of course, referred to his occupation with “Whorlie;” but “Burgess!”—probably the most detested sound that ever entered his ears—concerned a half-witted and deformed girl called Annie Burgess, of whom Harry was alleged to be enamoured. That gentleman, however, represented the soft impeachment with all

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the vigour of which he was capable—and that was something to remember, as an occasional boy learned by tearful experience. But Harry was only one against many, and he generally got the worst of it in the long run. Saturday was a head day for the boys; a day of trial and trouble for their victim. First, he had to undergo the operation of “shaving,” in preparation for the Sabbath, and when it is mentioned that the politest term used for the barber was “Skin-em-Alive,” and that there was a couplet in currency in which something is said about

The Barber o' Blair,  
Wha tak's the skin an' leaves the hair!

the operation has an ominous look about it. But that was not all; for Harry would perhaps be seated on the chair, nicely arrayed in the barber's beautiful white-cum-sanguinary-splotch sheet, and with a first-class lather all over his week-old stubbled face, when the boys, with their flattened noses against the window or their heads in at the door, would decide that the exact psychological moment had arrived, and there was a concerted shout of “Wheel! Wheel!—Burgess! Burgess!” and Harry was up and after them, sheet, lather, and all. Like most of his kind, he was partial to bands, shows, and exhibitions of all kinds, but his special *penchant* was “birrals”—the “sombre trappings and the suits of woe” having a peculiar fascination for him. He was never tired talking about the grand turnout there would be by and by on his own account, and how much he would enjoy the procession on its way up the Boatbrae to Rattray Kirkyard. One day David Soutar, a fellow-worker with “Whorlie,” bothered him by insinuating that he would have nothing better than

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the very shabby “hearse” that belonged to the parish—a one-horse-spring-cart sort of thing that was disposed of afterwards to a man in Newtyle and used for selling coals—but Harry was emphatic that he would “rather get oot an’ travel!” He was not peculiar in having rather hazy ideas as to what was to follow that event. He certainly had

### A WHOLESOME DISLIKE OF THE NETHER REGIONS,

but, unfortunately, did not seem quite satisfied with the other place, for, as he explained, “the ministers sent a’ the puir fowk there,” adding, “an’ ye ken I never liket puir fowk!” which was quite true, as any strange beggars that happened to come in his way were not long in discovering. Among his other notions was to start farming on a large scale; he half-killed a man whom he discovered one day pulling up a number of stakes on some land he had appropriated for his own use. Then he was to open a chemist’s shop, which was to be fitted up in most gorgeous style, with any amount of glittering bottles and coloured jars about, and cures for all the ills that flesh is heir to—but “nae pills, mind ye”—for he didn’t think much of them as articles of diet. Another brilliant idea of his was a machine for “grindin’ auld fowk young,” and it was an experience to hear his thrilling description of the wonderful wheels within wheels, and the great big hopper into which the halt, the maimed, the blind, and other wrecks of humanity had only to be dropped—then one good, vigorous turn of the crank and the trick was accomplished. But Harry’s rejuvenating machine was of no avail when his own time came. In his later years he fell into consumption, and was confined to bed for

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a considerable period before the end. When he felt it approaching, his old friend Andra came to see him, and, with the memory of old days strong upon him, Harry held out his wasted hands to him, exclaiming, "Tak' me in your arms, Andra!" He passed away on 6th November 1853, and through the kindness of Mr David Brown, innkeeper, Daft Harry's funeral was all that he had desired and anticipated.