

LIFE  
OF  
DAVID HAGGART,

WHO WAS

*Executed*

AT EDINBURGH, 18th JULY, 1821,

For the

**MURDER**

OF THE DUMFRIES JAILOR.

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CONTAINING

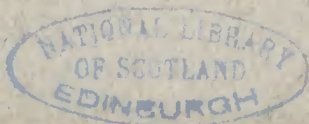
The whole of his depredations and murders faithfully copied from the large book written by himself; being the whole substance without the superfluity of language brought into the following pages; with an Account of his behaviour at the place of Execution.

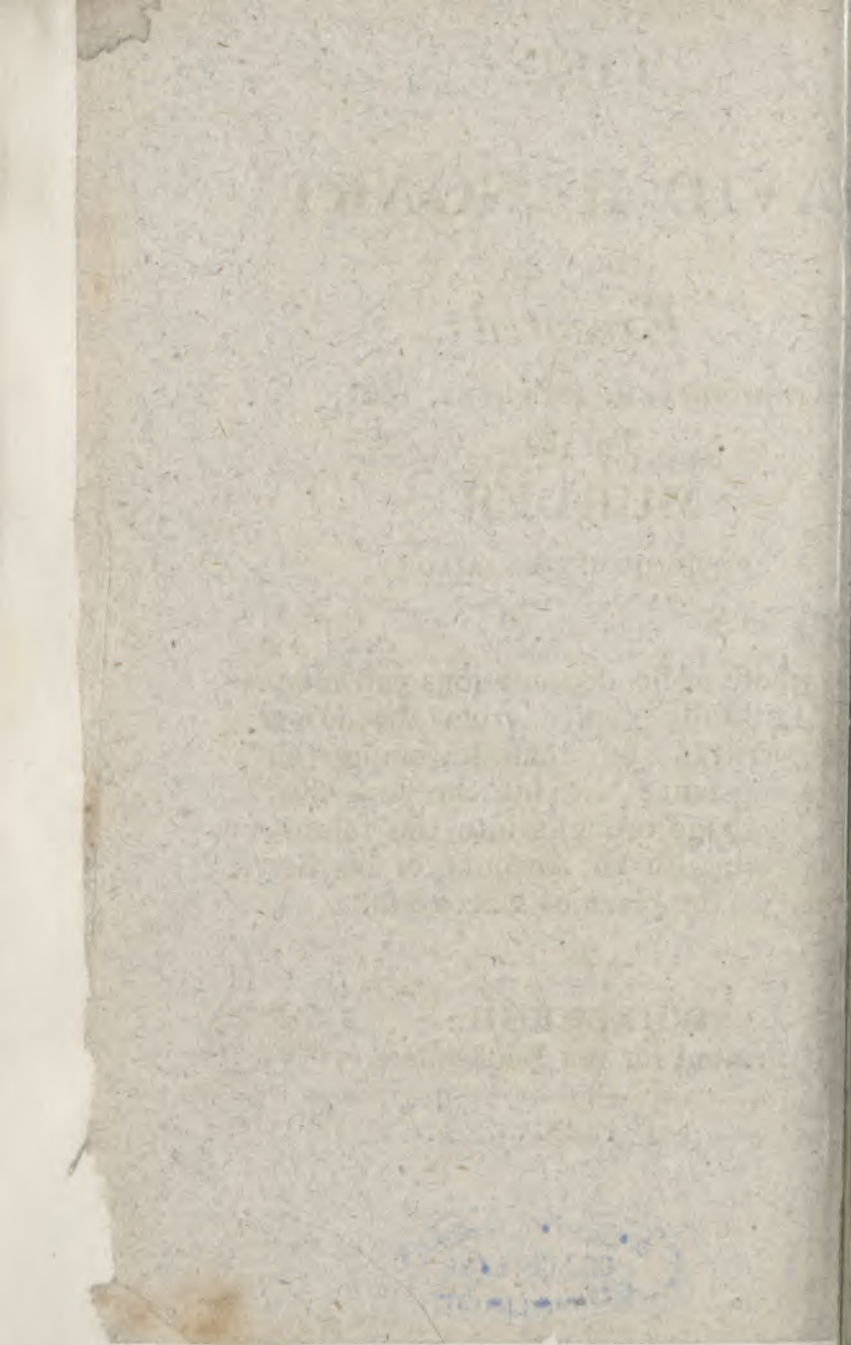
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EDINBURGH:  
Printed for the Booksellers.

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1823.





LIFE  
OF  
David Haggart.

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**D**AVID HAGGART was born at a farm town, called the Golden Acre, near Cannon-Mills, Edinburgh, on the 24th of June, 1801; his father was a game-keeper, but afterwards a dog trainer. He was early put to school, when he acquired a good knowledge of English Grammar, Writing and Arithmetic. About the age of ten, a trifling accident occurred at home, which for fear of punishment from his father, determined him to leave home, and from that moment he dated the commencement of his sinful career. He had made no wicked acquaintance as yet, but com-

mitted several depredations by himself. The first of these was stealing a Bantam cock from a woman at the back of the New Town, Edinburgh. Having taken a fancy to it, he offered to buy it, but the woman would not sell it; he fell on the scheme of putting another cock of his own a-fighting, and then came off with his prize. His next was lifting a shop till from a poor woman at Stock-Bridge. Being some miles from town and tired, he mounted a pony which was grazing on the road side, and rode home, where he kept it for some time, in an out house, where he had formerly kept a Cuddie; he kept it there for several days, until the owner found it out by accident. At Leith races in 1813, he enlisted in the Norfolk Militia, and learned the Drum and Bugle horn; the Regiment was disbanded about a year afterwards, and he was discharged. His father was then living in the south back of the Cannongate, Edinburgh, and he went home, where he was put as an apprentice to the Millwright and engineering business, with Cockburn and Baird, in the Cannongate.

where he behaved with honesty, and was very well liked by his employers.

His master having giving up business he was of course thrown idle, and at this time got acquainted with many worthless characters, among whom was one Barney, an Irishman, he had been bred a tailor in Dumfries, he was older than Haggart, of great bodily strength, and a most skillful pickpocket.—Barney put him up to a number of tricks, and they agreed to travel together. In August 1817, when just on the point of going to England, they past a day at Portobello Races, and picked a Gentleman's pocket of £11. the first ever Haggart attempted in day-light; with this took outside places on the Jedburgh Coach and got themselves genteely dressed. They attended St. James' fair at Kelso, and picked £20 from two persons; from thence they went to Dumfries, and stopt three weeks, they attended Lockerby fair, and going into a public house, a farmer and drover were casting out, when Barney blew the coal, and they fell a fighting, and both tumbled; Barney picked the farmer's pock-

et of £28. Haggart called for the waiter, and appeared in a violent passion, paid for a bottle of porter, abused him for putting them into such company, and immediately left the house. They departed next morning, and went to Langholm fair, where they took from a sheep farmer, £100, in ten pound notes, and £10, in 20 shilling notes—About half an hour after, they saw John Richardson, a Dumfries Officer, running about, but he did not notice them. They took a post-chaise, and went to Annan, and next day took the Coach for Carlisle.

On other nights they got 2 gold watches; they took about £70 in whole during their stay in Newcastle. They then went to Durham and at night broke a lonely house on the road to York; they got £20 here; they were apprehended for this act, tried, and found Guilty, and put back to prison to be brought up for sentence of death at the end of the assizes—They broke the prison that night, but Haggart only escaped: he provided himself with rope-ladder, and gave the saw to Ba

ney, who made his escape that same night. When Haggart was coming to Durham from York with his saw, in company with a York pick-pocket, they were pursued by two constables; and just as one was apprehending Haggart, he laid him low with his pistol.—They got clear away, and he never knew whether the man was murdered or not, but he thought so.—They next went to Coldstream fair, and Barney being found attempting a farmer's pocket, got three months in Jedburgh jail. Haggart went to Newcastle again, and to the same lodgings, where he was treated like a son; little did the people know who they were so kind to.—He did numerous tricks here, and then proceeded to Edinburgh, where he carried on the same line; he did not live in his father's house.

In September he started for Perth with one Henry, and had some adventures.—They returned to Leith, and were taken by the Police for some crimes got bail, and were liberated.

Haggart had a number of adventures in Edinburgh and neighbourhood, and

was put 4 months in Bridewell.—After being released, he met with some of his companions, and took a trip through the North: he was in Aberdeen jail for some time, and after committing more depredations, returned to Edinburgh.

They broke into several houses in Edinburgh and Leith, and on New Year's morning 1820 Haggart had for his share, 5 Silver Watches and a Gold one, taken on the South and North bridges.—He remained in Edinburgh till the 18th, when he was taken up and put into the Lock-up-house to find bail; he got out, and one night paid a visit to the Lock-up-house, and gave the keeper so much drink, that he got the key, and liberated six prisoners.

He went to Leith the night following, and took lodgings in Cupar street, and lived with a woman of the town; while here, he committed various acts in Leith, Edinburgh, and neighbourhood, by tying some shop doors, thrusting his hand through the windows and grasping whatever goods lay in his road, breaking into numerous houses, picking pockets of watches, &c.—In the course



of these operations he removed to different lodgings.

On the 1st of March, while sitting in his lodgings with a pickpocket of the name of Forrest, in Johnston Street, North Leith, Captain Ross of the Police and one of his men came in upon them: Ross seized Forrest and carried him off, leaving Haggart in charge of the Policeman; when left alone, the Policeman opened a bed-room door, and was looking into it. When Haggart forced him in, locked the door, and was making his way down the stair, when he was met by Ross and another Policeman; a struggle commenced, but the three overpowered Haggart, and he was carried to the Police Office streaming with blood. He was kept here two days, and then put into the jail to stand trial.—On the 27th March he got a small file, and cut the chains off his legs, penetrated through two thick walls with his handcuffs, liberated Forrest, and got to the outside about 6 o'clock next morning.—When on the outer stair, he saw a man coming up Queen Street, and he prepared to give

him battle ; but the man only said, " Run, Haggart; run, I wont touch ye." Haggart took hold of Forrest's hand, and ran even on to Dalkeith, without stopping, stopped there all night, and stole 12 yards blue cloth, started at two o'clock next morning for Kelso, robbed a farmer of £4. and set off for Dumfries.—They were joined by 2 other pick-pockets, one of whom was hanged shortly after at Glasgow.

In Dumfries he picked several pockets, and entered different dwelling-houses, when he met in with his old friend, Barney M'Guire, never having seen him since they parted at Kelso in 1818. They were intending to leave Dumfries that night, but Barney was taken up. Haggart started for Carlisle next morning, but was overtaken and carried back to Dumfries? Captain Ross arrived in a few days, and carried him back to Leith jail.

Barney was transported for fourteen years. Haggart was tried at Edinburgh on the 12th of July, but got off; he was then sent to Dumfries, to stand trial at the circuit there for house-breaking,

His trial did not go on, and he was sent back to jail.—Here he got acquainted with a lad, John Dunbar, who was under sentence of transportation. He also got acquainted with some people belonging to the town, who seemed willing to do him a favour, so Haggart made the plans of four keys, and a person was to get them made for him, there being 4 doors betwixt his cell and the street. Having thus as he thought, secured his liberty, he was too easily led into another scheme with Dunbar. Haggart thought himself certain of his own liberty, but he thought it would be a grand thing to clear the jail of all the prisoners. Laurie, another prisoner, proposed getting a stone, and tying it in a napkin, and some morning to knock down Hunter, the head jailor, and take the keys from him. Haggart was not fond of using the stone, as he did not want to hurt the jailor; and he proposed, when Thomas Morrin came up to the man under sentence of death, to gag him into a closet at the head of the stair, and take the keys from him; Dunbar and some others got the stone,

and put it into a bag. On Tuesday the 18th of October, about twelve o'clock, they noticed Hunter the head turnkey leave the jail to attend the Races, and shortly after, Morrin came up with two ministers, whom he locked in the cell with M·Grory, who was under sentence of death.—Shortly after, Haggart placed himself in the closet at the head of the stair, where he had previously put the stone and bag. Dunbar then called up Morrin to let out the ministers. He came up accordingly with a plate of potatoe-soup for M·Grory, and when he got to the top of the stair, Haggart came out upon him from the closet, and the pushing open of the door knocked the plate out of his hand; he then struck him one blow with the stone, dashed him down, and without the loss of a moment, pulled the key of the outer door from his pocket; he gave only one blow with the stone and threw it down. Dunbar picked it up, but no more blows were given, so that Morrin must have received his other blows in falling. Haggart observed Dunbar on the top of him, rising his breast for the key

which he had got. Simpson had a hold of Morrin's shoulders, and was beating his back upon the steps of the stair. Haggart rushed past them, crossed the stair as steadily as he could, pulled the key from his pocket, and opened the outer door.

On getting out at the door he ran round the east corner of the jail wall, and then walked rapidly round the back street, and round a great part of the town, till he came to the back of the King's Arms Inn. Dunbar made up to him, and that very moment they saw a policeman coming right up to meet them; on this they wheeled about and ran, but Dunbar was taken before he ran ten yards, and Haggart had the mortification to see his fellow adventurer secured; he once thought of bolting among them to rescue him, but the mob was too great for him; he went up through the yard of the King's Arms without meeting any body, crossed the High Street, and ran down the Vennel to the Nith. He kept along the water-side till he got away to the east of Cumtungan Wood, having run nearly ten

miles in less than an hour. He then got on the high road to Annan, when he saw a post-chaise at full gallop almost within 20 yards of him. Upon this he buttoned his coat, and leapt a hedge into a field where some people were raising potatoes. They all joined the police-men, who had got out of the chaise in pursuit of him; he crossed the field at a slapping pace, and made for Cumlungan Wood; he bolted over a very deep ditch covered with briers, and ran a few steps along the side of the hedge, to make the police-men think he was going into the wood; he then wheeled round, louted, and when they went up the one side of the ditch he ran down the other: little did they know he was so near them, he could have breathed upon John Richardson, as he passed him. In this way he came to the cross road which leads from the Nith to the public road, and never did a fox double the hounds in better style.

He then made for Annan, and getting on a mile or two on the Carlisle road, he went into a belt of planting. Watching an opportunity, he dived in-

to a hay stack, and lay there till next day at two o'clock in the afternoon, when he heard a woman ask a boy if that lad was taken who had broke out of Dumfries jail; the boy answered, no, but the jailor died last night. On hearing this, Haggart lay insensible for a good while; he left the stack, and seeing a scare crow in a field, he took some of the old clothes and put them on to disguise himself. On the Wednesday night he slept in a hay-loft; in the morning 2 men were feeding their horses, and he overheard them speaking about him; he started for Carlisle, and then to Newcastle, where he stopped for some days, and along with one Fleming, picked £22. in the market from a man; here he passed close to John Richardson, who was in quest of him, but was not noticed. He left Newcastle for Scotland, he got upon the Berwick Coach, and then took a ticket for Edinburgh, but only went to Dunbar in the Coach, remained in Dunbar, and set off for Edinburgh next morning, met with a gentleman, and took the same lodgings with him in the

Lord Duncan Tavern, Canongate. After seperating from the gentleman, he stopt at Jock's Lodge with a friend; while here he visited his father and some acquaintances, disguised in women's clothes. One night dressed in his own clothes, taking a walk from Portobello to Leith, he met Captain Ross of the Leith Police, their eyes met and both stood motionless until Haggart feigned to pull a pistol from his breast, the captain knowing him too well before, immediately took to his heels, and Haggart immediately turned through the fields, and made to Jock's Lodge; he then crossed the Forth, and went through Cupar to Dundee, and disguised himself in sailor's clothes; here he committed a number of depredations. He then returned to Newhaven, and went up to Edinburgh, and the first thing he saw was a bill posted up, offering a reward of 70 Guineas for his apprehension, this determined him to go north again; he arrived in Dundee, and from thence went to Perth; he attended the fairs in Perth, Dunkeld, Kenmore, &c. and robbed some Cattle-Dealers to a



considerable amount. One night in his lodgings in Perth, 2 policemen came in upon him, but the determined manner in which he received them, made them hesitate in apprehending him, and Haggart gained an opportunity to escape; he left Perth for Glasgow, and made up his mind to go to Ireland, and started in the Steam Boat; here he was recognized by the Provost of Kircaldy, who went ashore at Lamlash, Haggart was ready to jump overboard, but the boat went off without the Provost; he landed in Belfast, where he attended fairs, &c. and was in continual scenes of robbing, knocking down, &c. At Drunmore market he was seized and taken before a magistrate; he was asked what name he had, he answered in high Tipperara, it was John M'Colgan from Armagh; he was cross examined, and shewn a Dublin paper with a description of his person, &c. he denied being a Scotsman, and passed off the brogue so well, that the magistrate was in doubts, but he was ordered to be detained, and three yeomen sat in the court-house to guard him; he plied

them so well with drink, that he prevailed on them to let a young woman bring him some supper, and when she came, he got leave to speak with her privately behind the boxes of the court, where there is a large window, he bolted right thro' the window without being hurt by the fall: he crossed the street, and into an entry, where he saw his keepers below the window staring at each other; he started for Belfast, and then to Dublin, and paid his passage for America at the Pigeon house, but meeting in with one called O'Brien, he changed his mind; here he robbed a man in 100 guineas in gold, and jaunted through the country in Cars with women of bad fame; he was taken up for robbing a drover at Downpatrick, and put into jail, where he saw more scenes of wickedness than ever he had witnessed all his life; the women's room was immediately above the men's, and days' provision was served out to them at one time; they blocked up the door and made a hole betwixt the 2 apartments and kept possession in the most riotous manner; before his trial he bribed the

drover not to swear he was the person, and he was banished for 7 years; in jail he was visited by the magistrate of Drummore, who ordered the jailor to put him in strong irons.

Haggart denied that he had ever been in Drummore, and said his name was O'Brien, and not M'Colgan; he was moved to Kilmainham jail among other criminals; here he made his escape, but was caught by some of the prisoners informing the jailor of his designs.

Next day the whole of the prisoners were called out into the court-yard, and in a few minutes John Richardson from Dumfries made his appearance, and began his examination; he passed him once, but upon a second look over he recognized him, and said, Davie, do you ken me? Haggart turned to the jailor, and in a master-piece of Irish brogue, said, what does the man say? don't you know him, was the answer; he said he did not, but John persisted that he did. On the 2d day he was put in irons, and conducted by John and an Irish Officer to Dumfries. They were 3 days and 3 nights on the road, and he experien-

ced great kindness from the officers. On their approach to Dumfries, thousands of people met them with torches in their hands. From Dumfries he was conveyed to Edinburgh jail, and placed under the care of Captain Sibbald, who he said, was the kindest jailor in the world. He was tried on the 11th of June, and the Jury gave in a verdict of guilty; when the Judge was passing the sentence, he said he grew dizzy and gasped for breath; he was carried back to jail, where he behaved in the most penitent manner, and wrote a history of his life for behoof of his father, from which this narrative is a faithful extract.

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## EXECUTION.

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EARLY on the morning of this execution, David Haggart joined earnestly in devotional exercise with his ministerial attendant. After the Chaplain of the Jail had given a prayer, one of the officers of justice appeared, and retire, as he had something to communicate to the unhappy prisoner.—Haggart immediately exclaimed in a hurried tone, "Oh! I suppose it is the executioner." His firmness for a moment abandoned him, and he walked rapidly across the cell, with his arms folded, and with dark and deep despair strongly painted on his countenance. He speedily, however, regained his composure: and when the execu-

tioner did appear, at once allowed his arms to be bound, he was then removed to a hall in the lower part of the Lock-up-house, where he was received by two of the clergymen of Edinburgh, and the magistrates. After prayers, the procession proceeded to the scaffold. The conduct of the unfortunate youth there was in the highest degree becoming. While the beneficial influence of religion was apparent in his whole demeanour, his natural firmness of character never for a moment forsook him; he kneeled down, and uttered an earnest prayer, and, after addressing a few words of deep and anxious exhortation to the great multitude by which he was surrounded, he met his fate with the same intrepidity, which distinguished all the actions of his short, but guilt and eventful life.

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The following song was made by Haggart the day after his condemnation; but his mind soon changed to a more serious subject, and his whole deportment was extremely pious.

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Able and willing, you will me find,  
Though bound in chains, still free in  
mind;  
For with these things I'll ne'er be griev'd,  
Although of freedom I'm bereav'd.

I am a rogue, I don't deny,  
But never liv'd by treachery;  
And to rob a poor man I disown,  
But them that are of high renown.

Now, for the crime I am condemned,  
The same I never did intend,  
Only my liberty to take,  
As I thought my life did lie at stake.

No malice in my heart is found,  
To any man above the ground,  
Now, all good people that speak of me,  
You may say I died for my liberty.

Although in chains you see me fast,  
No frown upon my friends you'll cast,  
For my relations were not to blame,  
And I brought my parents to grief and  
shame.

Farewell relations and friends also,  
The time is come that I must go ;  
As for foes, I have but one,  
But to the same I have done no wrong.

FINIS.