

## LIFE AND DEATH

OF

R A B H A.

THE GLASGOW GLUTTON,

WITH

AN ELEGY

WRITTEN BY

**William Cameron,***(Alias "Hawkie.")*

GLASGOW,

Printed by J. Muir, 49, Trongate Street.

THE  
STANDARD

R A B H A L I F E

AND

DEATH OF RAB HA'.

---

From the Glasgow Herald, Nov. 23, 1843

---

We understand that Robert Hall was found dead on Wednesday last, in a hay-loft in Thistle Street, Hutchesontown, belonging to Mr Whitelaw, who for some time past has kindly permitted the vagrant to shelter himself there from the inclemencies of the season. Rab is only deserving of notice in so far as he was known for his eccentric habits, and his vast animal or gastronomic powers, to almost every individual in the West of Scotland. Although originally, we believe,

a farm servant or agricultural labourer, Rab speedily abandoned settled employment for the idle roystering life of a vagrant, and became one of the most perfect specimens of the big beggarman which Scotland could produce. Powerful in frame, and of unbounded capacity of stomach, Rab wandered over all the west country, and was rarely absent from horse-race, fox-hunt, or coursing, for which he had a natural taste; but he delighted in these meetings more from the unlimited quantities of meat and drink which were supplied to him occasionally by those who knew his failing or ruling passion and were anxious to see how much the man could devour. Nothing pleased Rab more than when any party foolishly took up a bet on his eating qualities, and it is sad that those who staked their money on his powers were rarely the losers. Glasgow was generally his head-quarters, and so long as he had the liberty of throwing his limbs to rest in any stable or straw house, his utmost ambition as to lodgings was satisfied. Rab was a great admirer of the pugilistic art, but he had no great notion for fighting himself; and beyond the appetite to gratify desires little above those of the brute, we are not aware

that the man had much ill in him. His death was in keeping with such a life, for having tumbled into his lair in a state of intoxication, there is little doubt that he was smothered amongst the straw.

---

Rab was known by almost every person in the west of Scotland for his eccentricity of manners and appearance he being generally clothed in rags, made up of three, and sometimes four, pair of trousers, with as many jackets. It is stated, that various wagers were won by various noblemen and gentlemen by Ha's voracious appetite, and he was a great favourite amongst them, frequently getting his victuals at their houses

On one occasion, Rab being on a trip to Rothsay, upon his return home, two gentlemen undertook a wager that Rab would eat seven pound of ship biscuit! Rab no sooner heard of this treat than he commenced work, but the biscuit proving too hard for his jaws, he was obliged to give over after having eaten about four pound of them; however, the gentleman betting upon the appetite of Rab knew the bottom of his stomach better than to lose his money in that way. Rab being a little chagrined at his

defeat with the biscuit, said, that if the gentlemen were agreeable to double the bets, he would sup a peck of oatmeal made into brose. After asking him if he was full with eating the biscuit? he said he was not, but only he felt his jaws sore with crackling it, heset to work with the brose, and finished them in admirable style, leaving nothing but the empty cog. We think, upon the whole, that this feed was pretty considerable.

On another occasion, while lounging about the Broomielaw, he went into a house for a drink of water; as the woman happened to have none in the house at the time, she requested Rab to take a seat till she would return with some from a neighbouring well. During her absence, Rab was busily engaged in demolishing a stone of potatoes which the poor woman had made ready for herself and family and on being questioned by the woman, he said he was very dry and he thought the potatoes would quench his arouth.

Shortly afterwards, being about Hawk-head House, where there was a party of gentlemen wishing a little amusement, they thought fit to try Rab with another gorge;

L— K——, who was present, acquainted Rab that he had taken up a bet with another gentleman that he would eat a Calf. Without acquainting him in what manner it was to be cooked, Rab said he would do his endeavour. K—— having ordered the calf to be baked up in pies, after they were ready, he said to Rab that he might partake of a pie till the calf would be ready. One pie came in after another, till he had devoured the whole calf with the exception of one pie. He was then told him to eat that one also, when Rab bawled out, “K—, Lo’d I canna dae that, ye ken, the calf’s to come yet.”

If we were to insert all the anecdotes concerning this eccentric character they would fill a volume, we must therefore, commence the melancholy part of our story:—On Martinmas Wednesday, November 22, a number of Rab’s acquaintances from the country gave him several dozes of meat and drink, in which he indulged rather freely. Late in the evening he was seen making his way along Stockwell Street bridge, towards Hutchisontown, in a state of inebriety, where he found shelter in the hay loft alluded to, and carried to the Police Office, there, to a

wait farther investigation. It is supposed that he died partly by the drink he had swallowed, and partly by suffocation. Thus ended the career of poor Rab. He died as he lived, in the midst of gluttony and intemperance; and we can only lament that the man should have ever given himself up to such sensual appetites.

The following is an Elegy, written by W. Cameron, (alias Hawkie) on the occasion.

### E L E G Y.

Ye Glasgow folks, baith ane an' a',  
 Look sad, and let a tear doon fa',  
 For your big glutton, Rabbie Ha',  
     Is noo no more;  
 His soul's winged from a stable-'a't  
     To anither shore.

Rab, by profession, foolery feign'd,  
 For *that* the wretch eou'd not be blam'd,  
 Rab's *character* a glutton claim'd,  
     Beet, scone, or bannock:  
 A calf devouring a' at ance,  
     Ne'er turn'd his stamack.

Ye wastern swell's, baith ane and a',  
 Lord Kel—n noo come frae your ha',  
 In mournfu' weeds lament the ca',  
 Took puir Rab hame;  
 The epicures may hide their head  
 When they hear his name:  
 As simmer morning, ere the sun  
 The aught hour clock had scarcely rung,  
 The Briggate bakers they've aftisung  
 Rab's glorious taster,  
 Sax pints o' milk and ninety scones  
 Was his digester.

Ye wights i' theither side o' Styx,  
 Charon on that river claims his rights,  
 And so will Rab wi' a' his might,  
 Baith drunk an' sober;  
 He'll toom your pantries day and night,  
 Frae Sept'mber t' October.

Ye fairies, kelpies, ane an' a',  
 Ye maister deils, baith great an' sma',  
 Be sure and watch oor Rabbie Ha',  
 And guide him weel,  
 Or else your hannocks he'll mak' sma',  
 And pinch your meal.