

the circumstances which chequered the life and marked the character of my father.— Though, perhaps, in the estimation of many, these were commonplace, yet, to me they were still full of interest; and, as they seem to afford a true and undistorted picture of a Scottish clergyman's real character and fortunes, I have written them down to fill a spare corner in the *Tales of the Borders*.

William Douglas was the eldest son of a farmer in one of the northern counties of Scotland. The family had been tenants of the farm of Mains for five successive generations: and as far as tradition and the humble annals of the parish could be relied on, had borne an unspotted name, and acquired that hereditary character for worth which, in their humble station, may be regarded as constituting the moral nobility of human nature. Just and devout in their lives—sincere, unpretending, and unaffected in their manners—they were never spoken of but with respect and good will by their neighbours; and were often, in the domestic and rural affairs of the vicinity, the counsellors and umpires, in whose good sense, and integrity, and kindness of heart, their humble friends trusted with confidence. Such characters and families are to be found in almost every rural district of this country; for, "though grace gangs no' by generation, yet there is such a thing as a hawk in a guid nest." I believe in the homely proverb, though some metaphysicians may dispute it, but whether debatable or not in the abstract, William Douglas had the good fortune, as he deemed it, to grow up in the bosom of a family in which the characteristic of worth was cherished and transmitted as an heirloom.

The eldest son of the guidman of Mains showed an early fondness for his school exercises, and acquired, under the tuition of Roaring Jock, the dominie of the parish, a tolerable proficiency in the rudiments of literature. The guidman, being an elder of the kirk, was often at the minister's manse; and the bairns from Mains were occasionally invited to tea on the Saturdays and play days; and Paplay (the minister, was so denominated, from the name of a small estate of which he was the laird) shewed great favor to the 'auldest callant,' and often conversed with him about the subject of his reading. In these circumstances; and considering the religious character of the Mains family, it was

almost a matter of course that Willie should be destined by his parents, and prompted by his own predilections to 'the ministry.' And by the advice of Paplay and Roaring Jock Willie was sent to the Marischal College Aberdeen, where he gained a bursary at competition, and prosecuted his studies with assiduity, until, at length, in the fullness of time he became a licentiate of the church.

The only thing I remember to have been connected with this period of my life was his anecdotes of Paplay's eccentricities which were numerous—some of them personal, and some of them the peculiarities of the old school of clergy in Scotland. He was a pious and orthodox man; but withal had a tincture of the Covenanter about him, blended with the aristocratic and chivalrous feeling of a country gentleman of old family. In the troubled times, about the years 1744 he was a staunch Whig; and so very decided in his politics, that, when "Prince Charles" had the ascendancy in Scotland, he was either in arms or in hiding; and when he ventured to preach, he wore his sword on his pulpit, and a blue coat, girt with a belt in which a pair of pistols were hung—more like a general of war than a preacher of peace! Even on the day of defeat at Culloden, the Jacobites of the north was so strong, and Paplay so obnoxious, by reason of his vehement preaching against Popery, and Prelacy; the Pretender, that he continued long to wear his sword, (in the pulpit and elsewhere,) which was rather a formidable objection to the nonjurors about him, in the hands of a brave and athletic champion of the Whiggery. He assigned three reasons for wearing his sword after it seemed to some of his friends to be unnecessary;—"First, Because I am a gentleman; secondly, Because I can use it; and, thirdly, Because, if I doubt, you may try." Among some of his duties, he had a great admiration of a white spring, a white calf, and a bonny lass; and he never passed any of them in his way without doing homage. Though travelling horseback, he would dismount to bathe his feet in a limpid stream, as it gushed from earth, or to caress a white calf, or to salute a female—all which fantasies were united with the most primitive innocence. And hence, when he ate a meal, even in his own house, or when he was a refugee in a hay stack or kiln, he would without exacting from his wife and family the most urgent pressing.