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978-1-107-45367-8 - Sir Walter Scott: Tales of a Grandfather: Being the History of Scotland from the Earliest Period to the Battle of Flodden in 1513

Edited with Introduction and Notes by P. Giles

Excerpt

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## PREFACE.

ABBOTSFORD, *December 1827.*

THESE Tales were written in the interval of other avocations, for the use of the young relative to whom they are inscribed. They embrace at the same time some attempt at a general view of Scottish History, with a selection of its more picturesque and prominent points. Having been found useful to the young person for whom the compilation was made, they are now given to the public, in the hope that they may be a source of instruction for others. The compilation, though professing to be only a collection of Tales, or Narratives from the Scottish Chronicles, will nevertheless be found to contain a general view of the History of that country, from the period when it begins to possess general interest.

The Compiler may here mention, that, after commencing his task in a manner obvious to the most limited capacity, of which the Tale of Macbeth is an example, he was led to take a different view of the subject, by finding that a style considerably more elevated was more interesting to his juvenile reader. There is no harm, but on the contrary there is benefit, in presenting a child with ideas somewhat beyond his easy and immediate comprehension. The difficulties thus offered, if not too great or too frequent, stimulate curiosity and encourage exertion.

To these notices, which formed an introductory advertisement to the First Edition of this little work, it may be added, that the favourable reception which it has generally met with, has been at least equally gratifying to its author, as the public approbation of

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[More information](#)

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## 2 TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

former works destined for the amusement of children of a larger growth. He has, therefore, carefully revised the present edition, corrected several errors and inaccuracies, and made numerous and large additions, so as to bring the little book nearer its proper character, of an abridged History of Scotland, for the use of young persons. The reigns of Malcolm Canmore, and of his immediate successors, have been given in some detail, instead of passing at once from the defeat and death of Macbeth to the wars of Bruce and Baliol.

If time and other avocations permit, it is the author's purpose to carry this little work down to the period of 1748, when the two sister nations became blended together in manners as well as by political ties. The task will afford an opportunity to show the slow and interrupted progress by which England and Scotland, ostensibly united by the accession of James the First of England, gradually approximated to each other, until the last shades of national difference may be almost said to have disappeared.

W. S.

ABBOTSFORD, *Feb.* 1828.

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## DEDICATION.

TO HUGH LITTLEJOHN, ESQ.

MUCH-RESPECTED SIR,

ALTHOUGH I have not yet arrived at the reverend period of life which may put me once more on a level with yours, yet I find myself already better pleased to seek an auditor of your age, who is usually contented to hear the same story repeated twenty times over, than to attempt instructing the more critical hearers among my contemporaries, who are apt to object to any tale twice told. It is, therefore, probable that had we been to remain near to each other, I should have repeated to you many of the stories contained in this book more than once. But, since that has ceased to be the case, I have nothing remaining save to put them in this shape, in which you may read them as often as you have a mind.

I have in this little book imitated one with which you are well acquainted,—I mean the collection of Stories taken from the History of England, and which has been so deservedly popular.<sup>1</sup>

As you, however, happen to be a person of quick study, and great penetration, it is my purpose to write a little work, which may not only be useful to you at the age of five or six years, which I think may be about your worship's present period of life, but which may not be beneath your attention, either for style or matter, at the graver term of eight, or even ten years old. When, therefore, you find any thing a little too

<sup>1</sup> Stories from the History of England, by the Right Hon. J. W. Croker.

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[More information](#)

---

#### 4 TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

hard for you to understand at this moment, you must consider that you will be better able to make out the sense a year or two afterwards; or perhaps you may make a great exertion, and get at the meaning, just as you might contrive to reach something placed upon a high shelf, by standing on your tiptoes, instead of waiting till you grow a little taller. Or who knows but Papa will give you some assistance, and that will be the same as if he set you upon a stool that you might reach down what you wanted.

And so farewell, my dear Hugh Littlejohn. If you should grow wiser and better from what you read in this book, it will give great pleasure to your very affectionate

GRANDFATHER

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[More information](#)

## TALES OF A GRANDFATHER.

### FIRST SERIES.

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#### CHAPTER I.

*How Scotland and England came to be Separate Kingdoms.*

ENGLAND is the southern, and Scotland is the northern part of the celebrated island called Great Britain. England is greatly larger than Scotland, and the land is much richer, and produces better crops. There are also a great many more men in England, and both the gentlemen and the country people are more wealthy, and have better food and clothing there than in Scotland. The towns, also, are much more numerous, and more populous.

Scotland, on the contrary, is full of hills, and huge moors and wildernesses, which bear no corn, and afford but little food for flocks of sheep or herds of cattle. But the level ground that lies along the great rivers is more fertile, and produces good crops. The natives of Scotland are accustomed to live more hardily in general than those of England. The cities and towns are fewer, smaller, and less full of inhabitants than in England. But, as Scotland possesses great quarries of stone, the houses are commonly built of that material, which is more lasting, and has a grander effect to the eye than the bricks used in England.

Now, as these two nations live in the different ends

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[More information](#)

## 6 TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

of the same island, and are separated by large and stormy seas from all other parts of the world, it seems natural that they should have been friendly to each other, and that they should have lived as one people under the same government. Accordingly about two hundred years ago, the King of Scotland becoming King of England, as I shall tell you in another part of this book, the two nations have ever since then been joined in one great kingdom, which is called Great Britain.

But, before this happy union of England and Scotland, there were many long, cruel, and bloody wars between the two nations; and, far from helping or assisting each other, as became good neighbours and friends, they did each other all the harm and injury that they possibly could, by invading each other's territories, killing their subjects, burning their towns, and taking their wives and children prisoners. This lasted for many hundred years; and I am about to tell you the reason why the land was so divided.

A long time since, eighteen hundred years ago and more, there was a brave and warlike people, called the Romans, who undertook to conquer the whole world, and subdue all countries, so as to make their own city of Rome the head of all the nations upon the face of the earth. And after conquering far and near, at last they came to Britain, and made a great war upon the inhabitants, called the British, or Britons, whom they found living there. The Romans, who were a very brave people, and well armed, beat the British, and took possession of almost all the flat part of the island, which is now called England, and also of a part of the south of Scotland. But they could not make their way into the high northern mountains of Scotland, where they could hardly get anything to feed their soldiers, and where they met with much opposition from the inhabitants. The Romans, therefore, gave up all attempts to subdue this impenetrable country, and resolved to remain satisfied with that

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[More information](#)

## THE ROMANS IN SCOTLAND 7

level ground, of which they had already possessed themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Then the wild people of Scotland, whom the Romans had not been able to subdue, began to come down from their mountains, and make inroads upon that part of the country which had been conquered by the Romans.

These people of the northern parts of Scotland were not one nation, but divided in two, called the Scots and the Picts; they often fought against each other, but they always joined together against the Romans, and the Britons who had been subdued by them. At length, the Romans thought they would prevent these Picts and Scots from coming into the southern part of Britain, and laying it waste. For this purpose, they built a very long wall between the one side of the island and the other, so that none of the Scots or Picts should come into the country on the south side of the wall; and they made towers on the wall, and camps, with soldiers, from place to place; so that, at the least alarm, the soldiers might hasten to defend any part of the wall which was attacked. This first Roman wall was built<sup>2</sup> between the two great Friths of the Clyde and the Forth, just where the island of Britain is at the narrowest, and some parts of it are to be seen at this day. You can see it on the map.

This wall defended the Britons for a time, and the Scots and Picts were shut out from the fine rich land, and enclosed within their own mountains. But they were very much displeased with this, and assembled themselves in great numbers, and climbed over the wall, in spite of all that the Romans could do to oppose them. A man, named Grahame, is said to have been the first soldier who got over; and the

<sup>1</sup> The first invasion of England by the Romans, under Julius Cæsar, was in the 55th year before the Christian Era; that of Scotland, under Agricola, A.D. 80.

<sup>2</sup> During the invasion of Agricola, A.D. 81—and rebuilt by Antoninus in 140.

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[More information](#)

## 8 TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

common people still call the remains of the wall Grahame's Dike.

Now the Romans, finding that this first wall could not keep out the Barbarians (for so they termed the Picts and the Scots), thought they would give up a large portion of the country to them, and perhaps it might make them quiet. So they built a new wall, and a much stronger one than the first, sixty miles farther back from the Picts and Scots.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Barbarians made as many furious attacks to get over this second wall, as ever they had done to break through the former. But the Roman soldiers defended the second wall so well, that the Scots and Picts could not break through it; though they often came round the end of the wall by sea, in boats made of ox hides, stretched upon hoops, landed on the other side, and did very much mischief. In the meantime, the poor Britons led a very unhappy life; for the Romans, when they subdued their country, having taken away all their arms, they lost the habit of using them, or of defending themselves, and trusted entirely to the protection of their conquerors.

But at this time great quarrels, and confusion, and civil wars, took place at Rome. So the Roman Emperor sent to the soldiers whom he had maintained in Britain, and ordered that they should immediately return to their own country, and leave the Britons to defend their wall as well as they could, against their unruly and warlike neighbours the Picts and Scots. The Roman soldiers were very sorry for the poor Britons, but they could do no more to help them than by repairing the wall of defence. They therefore built it all up, and made it as strong as if it were quite new. And then they took to their ships, and left the island.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The wall of Hadrian, built A.D. 120. It extended quite across the island, from the river Tyne at Newcastle to the Solway Frith at Carlisle.

<sup>2</sup> After the partial occupation of Great Britain by the Romans during a period of nearly 500 years, they finally abdicated the island, A.D. 410.



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[More information](#)

## PICTS, SCOTS, AND SAXONS 9

After the departure of the Romans, the Britons were quite unable to protect the wall against the Barbarians; for, since their conquest by the Romans, they had become a weak and cowardly people. So the Picts and the Scots broke through the wall at several points, wasted and destroyed the country, and took away the boys and girls to be slaves, seized upon the sheep, and upon the cattle, and burned the houses, and did the inhabitants every sort of mischief. Thus at last the Britons, finding themselves no longer able to resist these barbarous people, invited into Britain to their assistance a number of men from the North of Germany, who were called Anglo-Saxons. Now, these were a very brave and warlike people, and they came in their ships from Germany, and landed in the south part of Britain, and helped the Britons to fight with the Scots and Picts [A.D. 449], and drove these nations again into the hills and fastnesses of their own country, to the north of the wall which the Romans built; and they were never afterwards so troublesome to their neighbours.

But the Britons were not much the better for the defeat of their northern enemies; for the Saxons, when they had come into Britain, and saw what a beautiful rich country it was, and that the people were not able to defend it, resolved to take the land to themselves, and to make the Britons their slaves and servants. The Britons were very unwilling to have their country taken from them by the people they had called in to help them, and so strove to oppose them; but the Saxons were stronger and more warlike than they, and defeated them so often, that they at last got possession of all the level and flat land in the south part of Britain. However, the bravest part of the Britons fled into a very hilly part of the country, which is called Wales, and there they defended themselves against the Saxons for a great many years; and their descendants still speak the ancient British language, called Welsh. In the meantime, the Anglo-Saxons spread themselves throughout

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[More information](#)

## 10 TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

all the south part of Britain, and the name of the country was changed, and it was no longer called Britain, but England; which means the land of the Anglo-Saxons who had conquered it.

While the Saxons and Britons were thus fighting together, the Scots and the Picts, after they had been driven back behind the Roman wall, also quarrelled and fought between themselves; and at last, after a great many battles, the Scots got completely the better of the Picts. The common people say that the Scots destroyed them entirely; but I think it is not likely that they could kill such great numbers of people. Yet it is certain they must have slain many, and driven others out of the country, and made the rest their servants and slaves; at least the Picts were never heard of in history after these great defeats, and the Scots gave their own name to the north part of Britain, as the Angles, or Anglo-Saxons, did to the south part; and so came the name of Scotland, the land of the Scots; and England, the land of the English. The two kingdoms were divided from each other, on the east by the river Tweed; then, as you proceed westward, by a great range of hills and wildernesses, and at length by a branch of the sea called the Frith of Solway. The division is not very far from the old Roman wall. The wall itself has been long suffered to go to ruins; but, as I have already said, there are some parts of it still standing, and it is curious to see how it runs as straight as an arrow over high hills, and through great bogs and morasses.

You see, therefore, that Britain was divided between three different nations, who were enemies to each other.—There was England, which was the richest and best part of the island, and which was inhabited by the English. Then there was Scotland, full of hills and great lakes, and difficult and dangerous precipices, wild heaths, and great morasses. This country was inhabited by the Scots, or Scottish men. And there was Wales, also a very wild and mountain-