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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR  
OF  
WILLIAM CAVENDISH CUNNINGHAM DALYELL,  
CAPTAIN R.N.

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Thy sires of old were heroes fam'd in arms, —  
To toils inur'd, and rear'd midst war's alarms,  
They spurn'd inglorious ease, and tranquil life, —  
Rous'd their fierce clans and courted martial strife !  
Strange lands they travers'd, — bold adventures sought,  
Fore England's king thy brave ancestor fought  
And England's champion — *gentler manners taught !*\* }  
Loud plaudits from surrounding peers were wrung —  
And Scotia's bards the patriot impulse sung,  
Though bright their deeds in Scottish annals shine }  
As bright and lasting rays illumine thine,  
And with *their* ancient fame shall *thy* renown entwine.

EDITOR.

**C**APTAIN W. C. C. DALYELL, the subject of the following memoir, is the fifth and youngest son of the late Sir Robert Dalyell, Bart. of Binns, near Edinburgh, by Elizabeth, daughter of Nicol Graham, Esq. of Gartmore, and Lady Margaret, daughter of William, Earl of Glencairn. He was born 27th April, 1784.

Captain Dalyell's ancestors have frequently distinguished themselves in the service of their country ; and the name itself is said to owe its origin to an incident occurring at a very remote period. A kinsman and favourite of one of the ancient Kings of Scotland having been taken prisoner by his enemies, and hanged in sight of the Scottish camp, a great reward was offered to whomsoever should cut the body down. But none would hazard the perilous enterprise, until a gentleman of acknowledged valour in the retinue of the King stepped forward, exclaiming, "*Dalyell,*" which, in the language of the times, signified, "*I dare.*" He accordingly left the camp, and succeeded in restoring to the King the body of his friend. His courage did not

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\* See the dispute relative to the ladies of England and Scotland, next page.

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pass unrewarded : for the name of "*Dalyell*" was bestowed by the king, with other gifts, on him and his posterity : and he assigned for his coat armorial the body of a hanged man, and the motto, "*I dare*," which are actually borne by all persons of the surname at this day ; and by none more deservedly than the subject of this biographical memoir.

The specific gifts with which the king, whose name was *Ken-neth*, and who reigned about the year A. D. 841, rewarded this enterprising ancestor of Captain *Dalyell*, cannot at present be ascertained, nor the name of the king's relation whose body he rescued from the hands of his enemies. It took place at a period anterior to record, and of course could only be handed down by tradition, until it became recorded in later ages : the ancient history of Scotland is involved in great perplexity and confusion. The anecdote is, however, detailed in *Nisbett's System of Heraldry*, vol. I. and *Crawford's Peerage of Scotland*, p. 67.—There is a tract of land in Lanerkshire called *Dalyell*, pronounced in Scotland *D'yel*; and as most of the Scottish surnames have corresponding territories, it has been conjectured that the warrior in question bestowed the name upon those lands, or received his new appellation therefrom. At this early period, except the names of the reigning prince or his destroyer, or perhaps of some few monks, scarcely any surnames were preserved. There is no evidence that they were in use, till a much later period ; hence, the name previously borne by this first founder of the *Dalyell* race, cannot be ascertained.

We read also of Sir William *Dalyell*, a Scottish Champion, who was celebrated at the battle of Otterburn in 1388, where he lost an eye : and the chroniclers of the time exultingly dwell on his prowess. Tournaments being then in fashion, he repaired to the English court on the restoration of peace, when one of his countrymen gained a signal victory over another knight. But this was not unproductive of jealousy ; for it was alleged, although there might be brave men in Scotland, they had sprung from the illicit intercourse of Scottish ladies with Englishmen who had conquered their kingdom. Sir William *Dalyell*, indignant at this aspersion, retorted, that, even if the allegation were true, it was equally certain that the English warriors came from men of ignoble birth, whom the ladies of England had not disdained to receive

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as temporary partners during the absence of their lords in the neighbouring kingdom. This led to a more serious contest, in which Sir Piers Courtenay, an English champion, challenged Sir William Dalyell to single combat: but after an eminent display of valour on both sides, he was wounded by his antagonist, but without the victory having declared for the Scottish knight, the honour of each was satisfied.

The curious incidents above detailed are recorded by John Fordun, in a work called *Scoti-chronicon*, which is considered as the most authentic history of the country. The author was contemporary with the incidents he related. Mr. John Graham Dalyell, by whom these interesting particulars were transmitted, examined ancient manuscripts of this work, to ascertain whether they corresponded with the anecdote, as given by more recent historians, and he found that they did so. The combat took place in the presence of Richard II. in 1399. The historian says, “the helmet of the Scottish knight was lost twice successively in the first two courses, but in the third his weapon struck out two of the English champion’s front teeth.” Sir William Dalyell was not wounded, so far as appears, on this occasion.

The Editor desired elucidation as to the name of this family being sometimes spelled *Dalziel*; and Mr. J. G. Dalyell informed him, that there is no such letter as *z* in the ancient Scottish language. But from the resemblance of the Saxon *g*, which seems to have an analogous figure to *z*, and a sound such as *y*, that letter began in later times to supplant *y*, but under the form of *z*. Thus Mackenzie is still pronounced Mackényie, and Menzies, Menyies, throughout Scotland.

But on descending to more modern times, we find the name of General Thomas Dalyell, an immediate ancestor of the subject of this memoir, who distinguished himself by his attachment to the royal family during the civil wars. In the reign of Charles I. he commanded the town and garrison of Carrick Fergus, where he was taken prisoner. He was again taken prisoner when major-general at the battle of Worcester, in 1651, and committed to close confinement in the Tower: his estates were forfeited, and himself excepted from Cromwell’s general act of indemnity. However, he made his escape, and at the head of a small party, raised the royal standard in the north of Scotland. When it proved

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impossible to retrieve the fortunes of Charles II. the General repaired to the continent, bearing strong recommendations from that Prince to foreign powers, for courage and fidelity; and having entered the service of the Czar Alexis Michaelowitch, of Russia, he was soon promoted to the rank of general in his army. There he was employed in the Russian wars with the Turks and Tartars: but the restoration of the family of Stuart having in the mean time taken place, General Dalyell requested permission to return to his native country. The Czar, therefore, directed a testimony of his services to pass under the great seal of his empire, which is still preserved in Captain Dalyell's family, written in the Russian language. After enumerating the titles of the Czar, it proceeds thus:—"That he (General Dalyell) formerly came hither to serve our great Czarian Majesty. Whilst he was with us he stood against our enemies and fought valiantly. The military men that were placed under his command, he regulated and disciplined, and himself led them to battle; and he did and performed every thing faithfully as becoming a noble commander. And for his trusty services, we were pleased to order the said Lieutenant-general to be made a General. And now, having petitioned us to give him leave to return to his own country, we, the great Sovereign and Czarian Majesty were pleased to order that the said noble General, who is worthy of all honour, Thomas, the son of Thomas Dalyell, should have leave to go into his own country. And by this patent of his Czarian Majesty, we do certify of him, that he is a man of virtue and honour, and of great experience in military affairs; and in case he should be willing again to serve our Czarian Majesty, he is to let us know of it beforehand, and he shall come into the dominions of our Czarian Majesty with our safe passports, &c. &c. Given at our Court in the Metropolitan city of Moscow, in the year from the creation of the world, 7173, January 6."

General Dalyell having returned to Scotland, was immediately appointed commander-in-chief of the forces, a privy counsellor, and for several successive parliaments represented his native country of Linlithgow. He raised a regiment of foot in 1666: and some years afterwards, also a celebrated corps of cavalry, the *Scots Greys*. The letters of service for both are still in possession of his descendants: the latter is dated 25th November, 1681.

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General Dalyell had a son likewise in the military profession, who was created a baronet of Nova Scotia, by a patent, wherein his alacrity in promoting the military service, is particularly specified.

Having been informed that an ancestor of Captain Dalyell had served in the battle of Blenheim, the Editor made inquiries, and found that a relative of the family, Colonel John Dalyell, was killed at the battle of Malplacquet; and that it might be him, or General Robert Dalyell, who had served in several wars during the first half of the last century, and who died in the early years of the reign of the present Sovereign, at a very advanced age. A print was engraved of this old veteran, after he had attained the age of 84, in which, we believe, some incidents of his professional career are mentioned.

Captain Dalyell's grandfather served in the wars of George I. and II.; and his father also during the wars in the Low Countries in the preceding century. He had a paternal uncle, James, who was aide-de-camp to Lord Amherst, and killed in 1763, in an engagement at a place since called Bloody Bridge, near Fort Detroit, in North America. A particular account of the action, in which this officer fell, at the head of the party which he led, is detailed in "*Mantes History of the War in North America*," now a scarce book. He was then a captain in the army, and aide-de-camp to the late commander of the forces—Lord Amherst. He had another uncle, in the naval service, who died in consequence of a wound on board the *Valiant*, 74. Captain Dalyell had also a paternal uncle, Colonel John Graham, who was mortally wounded in India, and died in consequence some time after on the continent, in 1775.

Mr. Dalyell received the first rudiments of his education under his father's roof; and when it was determined to send him into the royal navy, he was placed under the tuition of Dr. Burney, of Gosport, at which celebrated nautical school so many officers of merit have been educated.

He entered as volunteer midshipman, and served as master's mate the allotted period of time on board the *Thetis*, the *Pique*, and the *Seine*. Being taken very ill whilst on board the *Pique*, he was sent ashore to Haslar Hospital, and during his confinement

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there, the Pique, in company with the Jason, fought and captured the Seine.

Though he lost by sickness that opportunity of proving his courage in battle, he had the good fortune to partake of the next important achievement of Captain Milne: for, as the Sciae was cruising in the Mona passage, she fell in with and captured the Vengeance. On this occasion, Mr. Dalyell acted as aide-de-camp to Captain Milne, and his station, of course, was on the quarter-deck. Early in the action, Mr. Dalyell was sent to the galley, to order the second lieutenant, Mr. Milne, who commanded there, to point his guns lower. But, alas! he had pointed the last gun he was ever to direct. Just at the moment he was proceeding to the galley, a shot had struck his friend, which shattered his knee, and killed and wounded nine other persons! Mr. Milne was also much hurt in the body. Mr. Dalyell was greatly attached to this officer, whom he met borne by sailors at the foot of the quarter-deck ladder, on his way to the cock-pit. Though in a dying state he was still sensible, and a gleam of joy illumined his pallid visage, as Mr. Dalyell mournfully pressed his hand, and told him, "*the enemy must soon strike*"—a prediction that was shortly verified, and Mr. Milne almost instantly expired. This officer, though of the same name, was no relation to the captain. He was much respected and regretted by his captain and ship-mates. During a voyage from Africa to the West Indies, a seaman having fallen overboard, Mr. Milne leaped into the sea and saved his life.

In December, 1800, Mr. Dalyell was sent by Captain Milne, as prize-master, with nine seamen, on board a Spanish schooner, prize to the Seine. His orders were, to proceed with her to Jamaica: but having started a butt head during a gale of wind which came on within two or three days, and finding all attempts to keep her free were in vain, Mr. Dalyell stood in for the land, with the intention of running her ashore. She, however, filled so rapidly, there was barely time to save the people on board, but none to secure either their clothes, provisions, or water. Indeed, if there had been time to have saved any thing, there was no room for stowage; for so small was the boat, not a single person more could have been stowed, and if there had been one more

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they must have drawn lots who was to perish! Mr. Dalyell and his nine comrades were then in a most awful situation, —crammed in a small boat, without water or provisions, in the open ocean; and if it had blown even a fresh gale, they must inevitably have been overwhelmed by the waves. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when they quitted the schooner, which almost instantly went down: they rowed all night, and it was about noon the next day before they reached the coast of Cuba, S. and E. of Colleredos: the beach was sandy,—the land low and woody. Having landed, and secured the boat by drawing it up the beach, they penetrated in search of food and water several miles into the country; but without finding either habitation, or water, or any thing to alleviate their wants, and they were, of course, much exhausted by the fatigue of rowing for eighteen hours. The result of this fruitless expedition depressed their spirits greatly: a heavy shower of rain afforded them water, but they could find neither food nor shelter,—and their only chance of escape lay in their small boat. Under that, and the neighbouring trees, they passed a most gloomy night. The next morning, being the third of their quitting the schooner—they pulled, faint and weary, to the northward and westward, in hope of finding some creek that might lead to the haunts of men, or of falling in at sea with some fishing-boat or vessel. About mid-day they descried, and were observed by some fishermen, on board of whose vessels they were received and conveyed to their cabins on the coast near Cape Antonio. Mr. Dalyell, and the people thus rescued from a near prospect of one of the most miserable of deaths—were hospitably treated by the families of the fishermen, who plentifully supplied them with the best provisions their huts afforded. The transition was sudden,—the effect powerful. The comforts thus unexpectedly attained, restored vigour to their body, and energy to their mind. Mr. Dalyell, at this period, was only in his sixteenth year; an age when misfortune makes but transient impressions! Enjoying the present good—thoughtless of impending treachery—he was planning how to procure provisions, and reach his vessel off the N. coast of Cuba, when a party of military arrived at the hut, to whose care his host at once consigned Mr. Dalyell and the sailors under his command!

No visitors were ever less expected by—or less welcome to ma-

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riners! The fisherman might, however, have pleaded in his defence, that in taking Mr. Dalyell and the sailors to his hut, and relieving their wants, he had discharged his duty to the unfortunate; and to his king, in giving intelligence that there were enemies landed on the coast. Mr. Dalyell and his small party were marched towards the Havannah. Being dressed in a round jacket, he was at first treated and considered as one of the seamen, but when the Spaniards learned that he was the prize-master, he was treated as an officer. Understanding that Mr. Dalyell was destitute of money—for the schooner went down so suddenly, nothing could be saved but their lives—the governor of Moro Castle had him at his table, and after dinner, in the most affable and benevolent manner, placed a bag of gold before this young gentleman, desiring him to take whatever he had occasion for; and during Mr. Dalyell's stay at the Havannah, his kind attentions never ceased. Nor was his munificent confidence abused,—for after his arrival at Nassau, in Providence, Mr. Dalyell returned to the generous Spaniard some articles which he knew would be more acceptable than the five pound which he had received.

During Mr. Dalyell's stay at Moro Castle, he was kept in confinement, which lasted about two months. He was then exchanged and sent to New Providence. He went on board the *Echo*, S. W. Captain Scrril, in which he continued till he rejoined the *Seine* off Jamaica. Whilst cruising in that frigate, they captured a Spanish schooner laden with dry goods, in which Mr. Dalyell was sent as prize-master to Jamaica, where he heard of the peace of Amiens, and on investigation it proved that the capture was made but a very few hours previous to the time stipulated for, the continuance of hostilities having expired! Mr. Dalyell might have passed in the West Indies, but he preferred coming home in his ship, which was paid off at Chatham; and he passed his examination for lieutenant at Somerset House.

Not being able to procure his commission as lieutenant, Mr. Dalyell, after upwards of six years hard service, returned to Scotland a *passed midshipman*; there he remained till war recommenced, when, by the interest of Sir Alexander Cochrane, he was received as midshipman on board the *Antelope*, Sir Sidney Smith, then lying at Hosely Bay. It was on board that ship he first became acquainted with Lieutenant Hanchett and Mr. Bourne.



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Relative to Mr. Dalyell's services whilst belonging to the Antelope, the Editor received the following selection in April, 1814, from Captain Hanchett, of H. M. S. Diadem, who was commanding officer in most of the boat-actions of which he treats, and in which Mr. Dalyell greatly distinguished himself.

The editor inserts these few extracts with the more pleasure, because they exhibit Mr. Dalyell almost daily engaged in leading boat parties to some daring enterprise, wherein the proportion of personal risk, and hardships, is greater than in any other branch of the naval service.

“ 29th September, 1803.

“ A launch, barge, and six-oared cutter were sent in to reconnoitre the enemy's fleet in the Texel; the whole commanded by Lieutenant Hanchett. Mr. Dalyell commanded the barge. The boats were within half a mile of the admiral's ship in the Texel roads at day-light. Two schooners, and five rowing gun-boats, each mounting two twenty-four pounders, and manned with fifty men, pursued the three boats. Mr. Hanchett kept drawing slowly off the land, and when the gun-boats had separated from the schooners about two miles, he attacked the gun-boats, sunk one, and it is said killed 30 men, and drowned or wounded 27. The breeze springing up, the schooners approached rapidly, and were obliged to retreat from such superiority, fighting their way until within three miles of the ship. Mr. Dalyell displayed the most marked coolness and intrepidity during this action.”

“ 24th October, 1803.

“ Lieutenant Hanchett went in shore at night, with the pinnace and cutter, and Mr. Dalyell in the latter. At daylight in the morning, they drove 16 vessels on shore under Sandfort, and after driving the troops away who came to protect them, burnt three, and did as much damage to the rest as possible; the tide having left them dry, they could only bring one away.”

“ 28th October, 1803.

“ With five boats they drove 65 schuyts (fishing vessels) ashore under the Scheveling battery, set fire to them,\* and brought off two; but the garrison of the Hague, distant only two miles, being in motion, they were

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\* The havoc committed in the destruction of these small fishing vessels, ruined hundreds of industrious families, and furnished the enemy with the means of exciting the resentment of the Dutch against this country. The loss fell exclusively upon an industrious and inoffensive race of people, who were peculiarly attached to the House of Orange, and thereby, to the politics of Great Britain. In consequence of these events, and the burning a few houses on the coast, the *Moniteur* indulged in the bitterest invectives against the mode of warfare adopted by this country.—*EDIT.*

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recalled by the ship. On this occasion, Mr. Hanchett did not command; both him and Mr. Dalyell were in the boats."

" 30th October, 1803.

" Lieutenant Hanchett went in with the *Antelope's* barge (Mr. Dalyell being in the boat), and burnt and destroyed three vessels lying aground, within a mile of five guard vessels in the Vlie passage, about 4 P.M."

" 2d November, 1803.

" Mr. Hanchett volunteered with 25 men, and took the island of Rottum. The French troops, with an *exiled general*, destined for the Seychelle islands, would not wait for them to close; they were pursued across the island, and escaped from the opposite side on board of three schuyts. Messrs. Dalyell and Bourne were engaged in this expedition."

" 17th November, 1803.

" Lieutenant Hanchett, acting Lieutenant Dalyell, and Mr. Bourne, midshipman, sailed in the *Experiment* schuyt, from Yarmouth Roads for the coast of Zealand. She was manned with eleven men, and armed with three 18-pound carronades, fitted on a new principle by Mr. Whidbey, who is now superintending the Breakwater at Plymouth. An heavy gale of wind from the N.W. came on that night, and the next afternoon they were in shoal water (having thrown one of the guns overboard). Lieutenant Hanchett waited till the top of high water, and then run her ashore upon an extensive sand-bank, out of gun-shot of the sand-hills, on the S.W. end of the island of Goree; for, being in hopes of getting her off, when the weather moderated, he determined to defend her to the last. They were at low water a full mile from the sea-shore. Being discovered by the enemy, he was not slow in preparing to take possession of our schuyt. The second night the dragoons got on board, but did not take, the schuyt. On the third night, five out of the eleven men deserted to the enemy, probably from the effects of fear; and finding nothing could be done, they set her on fire, leaving her colours flying, and put to sea in the boat. The boat, a very small one, springing a leak when they were about three miles from the shore, they pulled in to board a vessel lying at an anchor under Schouwen; but as there was a very heavy battery which commanded her, Messrs. Hanchett, Dalyell, and Bourne, with the six seamen, were obliged to surrender as prisoners of war. Lieutenant Hanchett and his party were directly recognized by some seamen who had been liberated from vessels they had burnt and destroyed. They were conducted to Zierikzee, and put in close confinement as *incendiaries*. Buonaparte was then at Flushing, and having heard they belonged to Sir Sidney Smith, ordered them to be strictly guarded. On the seventeenth evening of their confinement, being the one preceding the day they were to be transported to Flushing, to be shewn to him, they effected their escape. Captain Hanchett's narrative mentions, that this was the only day they were allowed to walk out during their confinement, and then not without a guard. When they made their escape from Zierick Zee, commonly called Zerkzee, Mr. Hanchett sent Messrs. Dalyell and Bourne first. Mr. Hanchett followed just as guard was being relieved, and had a very narrow escape from detection; but, owing to presence of mind, he avoided that danger. As they returned,