The Story of McPherson

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Many, many years ago, in the hielands of Scotland a boy, Jamie MacPherson, was born to a beautiful gypsy and an Invereshie MacPherson. The child developed into a man of magnificent stature and intellect; possessing beauty, strength, and stature rarely equaled. Rather than waste such natural gifts, he gave himself up to the life of a highwayman, being the leader of a band of gypsies who, well armed, traveled the northern counties of Scotland helping themselves to the property of the the landed gentry.

My father was a gentleman,
Of fame and honor high,
Oh mother, would you ne'er had borne
The son so doom'd to die.

chorus- Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round
Below the gallows-tree.

It is reported, on good authority (the Clan MacPherson), that Jamie and his band of freebooters never perpetrated acts of thievery or harm upon any of the poor or distressed. Jamie never grasped the concepts of modern corporate politics and hence thought it more fun to steal from the rich. Of course some of the Lords, Dukes, Earls and such that were directly connected though the had it all backwards. Times being what they were, a few of the local gentry set about to hang Jamie and compatriots.

I've spent my life in rioting,
Debauch'd my health and strength,
I squander'd fast, as pillage came,
And fell to shame at length.

& ch

Before ultimately being brought to trial,MacPherson escaped several times from his captors. In Aberdeen, he was rescued from prison by his cousin, Donald and a gypsy named Peter Brown, aided by the populace. Shortly afterwards, he was captured, after a desperate resistance in the course of which one of Jamie's crew was killed at Keith Fair, by arch enemy Duff of Braco, who sort

of owned the local county of Baniff. He was again rescued, this time by the laird of Grant, but soon again recaptured and taken to Baniff prison by Duff and a very strong escort.

Farewell, yon dungeons dark and strong,

The wretch's destinie!

M'Pherson's time will not be long

On yonder gallows-tree.

& ch

The four prisoners were brought to trial before Sheriff Nicholas Dunbar (Nicky was a close friend of Duff) at Baniff in November 1700, accused of:" BEING YE MERCATS IN YR ORDINARY MANNER OF THIEVING AND PURSE-CUTTING, OR OF THE CRIMES OF THEFT AND MASTERFUL BANGSTREE AND OPPRESSION.and they were found "FYLLEN, CULPABLE, AND CONVICK" and sentenced "FOR SAE MUCKLE, AS YOU, JAMES MACPHERSON, ARE FOUND GUILTY OF BEING EGYPTIANS, AND VAGABONDS AND OPPRESSORS OF HIS FREE LIEGES. THEREFORE, I ADJUDGE AND DECERN YOU TO BE TAKEN TO THE CROSS OF BANIFF TO BE HANGED BY THE NECK TO THE DEATH"

O what is breath but parting breath?

On many a bloody plain

I've dar'd his face, and in this place

I'll scorn him yet again.

& ch

But vengeance I never did wreak,

When pow'r was in my hand,

And you, dear friends, no vengeance seek,

It is my last command.

& ch

Forgive the man whose rage betray'd

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MacPherson's worthless life;

When I am gone, be it not said,

My legacy was strife.

& ch

And so, the last capital sentence executed in Scotland under Heritable Jurisdiction took place in mid November 1700. It is reported that MacPherson played the fiddle up to the moment of execution; that he offered it to the members of the crowd but no one had the courage to accept it; he therefore broke it over his knee and threw it amongst the crowd with the remark, "No one else shall play Jamie MacPherson's fiddle."

He took his fiddle in both his hands
And he broke it all a stone,
Saying there's nae a han' shall ply on thee
When I am dead and gone.
& ch
Now farewell light, thou sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame distain his name,
The wretch that dares not die!

& ch

The legend has it that Duff of Braco saw a lone rider coming from Turriff and correctly assumed that he carried a pardon for Jamie from the Lord of Grant. As the story goes, he then set about turning the village clock 15 minutes ahead and so hanging MacPherson before the pardon arrived.

O reprieve was coming o the Brig o' Dans
for ta set MacPherson free,
For they set the clock a quarter before
And they hanged him from a tree.
& ch
& ch

And so hangs the legend of Jamie MacPherson.
ARB

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