

# The Souters of Selkirk

By James Hogg

I have heard another amusing story of a man of the same name, which brings it to my remembrance at present. This last was a shoemaker, a very honest man, who lived at the foot of an old street, called the Back Row, in the town of Selkirk. He was upwards of thirty, unmarried, had an industrious old stepmother, who kept house for him, and of course George was what is called “a hem bachelor,” or “a chap that was gayan wed to leeve.” He was a cheerful happy fellow, and quite sober, except when on the town-council, when he sometimes took a glass with the magistrates of his native old borough, of whose loyalty, valour, and antiquity, there was no man more proud.

Well, one day, as George was sitting in his shop, as he called it, (for no man now-a-days would call that a shop in which there was nothing to sell,) sewing away at boots and shoes for his customers, whom he could not half hold in whole leather, so great was the demand over all the country for George Dobson’s boots and shoes—he was sitting, I say, plying away, and singing with great glee,—

“Up wi’ the souters o’ Selkirk,  
An’ down wi’ the Earl o’ Hume,  
An’ up wi’ a’ the brave billies  
That sew the single-soled shoon!  
An’ up wi’ the yellow, the yellow,  
The yellow and green hae doon weel;  
Then up wi’ the lads of the forest,  
“But down wi’ the Merse to the deil!”

The last words were hardly out of George’s mouth, when he heard a great noise enter the Back Row, and among the voices one making loud proclamation, as follows:—

“Ho yes! Ho yes!  
Souters ane, soutens a’,  
Souters o’ the Back Raw,  
There’s a gentleman a-coming  
Wha will ca’ ye souters a’.”

“I wish he durst,” says George. “That will be the Earl o’ Hume wha’s coming. He has had us at ill will for several generations. Bring my aik staff into the shop, callant, and set it down beside me here and ye may bring ane to yoursell too. I say, callant, stop.—Bning my grandfather’s auld sword wi’ye. I wad like to see the Earl o’ Hume, or ony o’ his cronies, come and cast up our honest calling and occupation till us!”

George laid his oak staff on the cutting-board before him, leaned the old two-edged sword against the shop wall, at his right hand the noise of the proclamation went out at the head of the Back Row, and died in the distance; and then George began again, and sung the Souters of Selkirk with more obstreperous glee than ever. The last words were not out of his mouth, when a

grand gentleman stepped into the shop, clothed in light armour, with a sword by his side and pistols in his breast. He had a liveryman behind him, and both the master and man were all shining in gold. This is the Earl o' Hume in good earnest, thought George to himself; but, nevertheless, he sanna danton me.

"Good morrow to you, Souter Dobson," says the gentleman. "What the devil of a song is that you were singing?" George would have resented the first address with a vengeance, but the latter question took him off it unawares, and he only answered, "It is a very good sang, sir, and ane of the auldest—What objections have you to it?"

"Nay, but what is it about?" returned the stranger; "I want to hear what you say it is about."

"I'll sing you it over again, sir," said George, "and then you may judge for yourself. Our sangs up here awa dinna speak in riddles and parables; they're gayan downright;" and with that George gave it him over again full him, keeping at the same time a sharp look out on all his guest's movements, for he had no doubt now that it was to come to an engagement between them, but he was determined not to yield an inch, for the honour of old Selkirk.

When the song was done, however, the gentleman commended it, saying, it was a spirited old thing, and, without doubt, related to some of the early border feuds. "But how think you the Earl of Hume would like to hear this?" added he. George, who had no doubt all this while that the Earl of Hume was speaking to him, said good-naturedly, "We dinna care muckle, sir, whether the Earl o' Hume take the sang ill or wee I'se warrant he has heard it mony a time ere now, and, if he were here, he wad hear it every day when the school looses, an' Wattie Henderson wad gie him it every night."

"Well, well, Souter Dobson, that is neither here nor there. That is not what I called about. Let us to business. You must make me a pair of boots in your very best style," said the gentleman, standing up, and stretching forth his leg to be measured.

"I make you no boots, sir," says George, nettled at being again called Souter. "I have as many regular customers to supply as hold me busy from one year's end to another. I cannot make your boots—you may get them made where you please."

"You shall make them, Mr Dobson," says he; "I am determined to try a pair of boots of your making, cost what they will. Make your own price, but let me have the boots by all means; and, moreover, I want them before to-morrow morning."

This was so conciliatory and so friendly of the Earl, that George, being a good-natured fellow, made no farther objection, but took his measure, and promised to have them ready. "I will pay them now," said the gentleman, taking out a purse of gold; but George refused to accept of the price till the boots were produced. "Nay, but I will pay them now," said the gentleman; "for, in the first place, it will insure me of the boots, and, in the next place, I may probably leave town to-night, and make my servant wait for them. What is the cost?"

"If they are to be as good as I can make them, sir, they will be twelve shillings."

"Twelve shillings, Mr Dobson! I paid thirty-six for these I wear in London, and I expect yours will be a great deal better. There are two guineas, and be sure to make them good."

"I cannot, for my life, make them worth the half of that money," says George. "We have no materials in Selkirk that will amount to one-third of it in value." However, the gentleman flung down the gold and went away, singing the Souters of Selkirk.

"He is a most noble fellow that Earl of Hume," says George to his apprentice. "I thought he and I should have had a battle, but we have parted on the best possible terms."

"I wonder how you could bide to be souter'd yon gate?" said the boy.

George scratched his head with the awl, bit his lip, and looked at his grandfather's sword. He had a great desire to follow the insolent gentleman, for he found that he had inadvertently suffered a great local insult to be passed on him without offering any retaliation. He could do nothing now but keep it to himself.

After George had shaped the boots with the utmost care, and of the best and finest Kendal leather, he went up the Back Row to seek assistance, so that he might have them done at the stated time; but never a stitch of assistance could George obtain, for the gentleman had trysted a pair of boots in every shop in the Row, paid for them all, and called every one of the shoemakers souters twice over.

Never was there such a day in the Back Row of Selkirk! What could it mean? Had the gentleman a whole regiment coming up, all of the same size, and the same measure of legs? Or was he not rather an army agent, come to take specimens of the best workmen in the country? This last being the prevailing belief, every Selkirk souter threw off his coat, and fell a slashing and cutting of Kendal leather; and such a forenoon of cutting, and sewing, and puffing, and roseting, never was in Selkirk since the battle of Flodden-field.

George's shop was the nethermost of the street, so that the stranger guests came all to him first; so, scarcely had he taken a mouthful of a hurried dinner, and begun to sew again, and, of course, to sing, when in comes a fat gentleman, exceedingly well mounted, with sword and pistols; he had fair curled hair, red cheeks that hung over his stock, and a liveryman behind him. "Merry be your heart, Mr Dobson, but what a plague of a song is that you are singing?" said he. George looked very suspicious-like at him, and thought to himself, now I could bet any man two gold guineas that this is the Duke of Northumberland, another enemy to our town; but I'll not be cowed by him neither, only I could have wished I had been singing another song when his Grace came into the shop. These were the thoughts that run through George's mind in a moment, and at length he made answer—"We reckon it a good sang, my lord, and ane o' the auldest."

"Would it suit your convenience to sing that last verse over again?" said the fat gentleman with the fair curled hair, and the red cheeks hanging over his cravat; and at the same time he laid hold of his gold-handled pistols.

"O certainly, sir," said George; "but at the same time I must take a lesson in manners from my superiors;" and with that he seized his grandfather's cut-and-thrust sword, and cocking that up by his ear, he sang out with fearless glee—

"The English are dults, to a man, a man—  
Fat puddings to fry in a pan, a pan—  
Their Percies and Howards  
We reckon but cowards  
Ay, turn the blue bonnets wha can, wha can!"

George now set his joints in that manner, that the moment the Duke of Northumberland presented his pistol, he might be ready to cleave him, or cut off his right hand, with his grandfather's cut-and-thrust sword; but the fat man with the curled hair durst not venture the issue he took his hand from his pistol, and laughed till his big sides shook. "You are a great original, Dobson," said he; "but you are nevertheless a brave fellow a noble fellow a souter among a thousand, and I am glad I have met with you in this mood too. Well, then, let us proceed to business. You must make me a pair of boots in your very best style, George, and that without any loss of time."

“O Lord, sir, I would do that with the greatest pleasure, but it is a thing entirely out of my power,” said George with a serious face.

“Pooh, pooh, I know the whole story,” said the fat gentleman with the fair curled hair and the red cheeks. “You are all hoaxed and made fools of this morning; but the thing concerns me very much, and I’ll give you five guineas, Mr Dobson, if you will make me a pair of good boots before to-morrow at this time.”

“I wad do it cheerfully for the fifth part o’ the price, my lord,” said George; “but it is needless to speak about that, it being out o’ my power. But what way are we hoaxed? I dinna account ony man made a fool of wha has the cash in his pocket as wed as the goods in his hand.”

“You are all made fools of together, and I am the most made a fool of any,” said the fat gentleman. “I betted a hundred guineas with a young Scottish nobleman last night, that he durst not go up the Back Row of Selkirk, calling all the way, ‘Souters ane, souters a’, souters o’ the Back-raw;’ and yet, to my astonishment, you have let him call it, and insult you all with impunity; and he has won.”

“Deil confound the rascal!” exclaimed George. “If we had but taken him up! But we took him for our friend, come to warn us, and lay all in wait for the audacious fellow who was to come up behind.”

“And a good amends you took of him when he came,” said the fat gentleman. “Well, after I had taken the above bet, up speaks another of our company, and he says—‘Why make such account of a few poor cobblers, or souters, or how do you call them? I’ll bet a hundred guineas, that I’ll go up the Back Row after that gentleman has set them all agog, and I’ll call every one of them souter twice over to his face.’ I took the bet in a moment: ‘You dare not, for your blood, sir,’ says I. ‘You do not know the spirit and bravery of the men of Selkirk. They will knock you down at once, if not tear you to pieces.’ But I trusted too much to your spirit, and have lost my two hundred guineas, it would appear. Tell me, in truth, Mr Dobson, did you suffer him to call you souter twice to your face without resenting it?”

George bit his lip, scratched his head with the awl, and gave the lingels such a yerck, that he made them both crack in two. “D—n it! we’re a’ affrontit thegither!” said he in a half whisper, while the apprentice boy was like to burst with laughter at his master’s mortification.

“Well, I have lost my money,” continued the gentleman, “but I assure you, George, the gentleman wants no boots. He has accomplished his purpose, and has the money in his pocket; but as it will avail me I may not say how much, I entreat that you will make me a pair. Here is the money,—here are five guineas, which I leave in pledge; only let me have the boots. Or suppose you make these a little wider, and transfer them to me; that is very excellent leather, and will do exceedingly well; I think I never felt better;” and he stood leaning over George, handling the leather. “Now, do you consent to let me have them?”

“I can never do that, my lord,” says George, “having the other gentleman’s money in my pocket. If you would offer me ten guineas, it would be the same thing.”

“Very well, I will find those who will,” said he, and off he went, singing, “Turn the blue bonnets wha can, wha can.”

“This is the queerest day about Selkirk that I ever saw,” said George; “but really this Duke of Northumberland, to be the old hereditary enemy of our town, is a real fine frank fellow.”

“Aye, but he souter’d ye, too,” said the boy.

“It is a lee, ye little blackguard.”

“I heard him ca’ you a souter amang a thousand, master; an’ that taunt will be heard tell o’ yet.”

“I fancy, callant, we maun let that flee stick to the wa’,” says George; and sewed away, and sewed away, and got the boots finished the next day by twelve o’clock. Now, thought he to himself, I have thirty shillings by this bargain, and so I’ll treat our magistrates to a hearty glass this afternoon; I hae muckle need o’ a slockening, and the Selkirk bailies never fail a friend. George put his-hand in his pocket to clink his two gold guineas. The devil a guinea was in George’s pocket, nor plack either! His countenance changed, and fell so much, that the apprentice noticed it, and suspected the cause; but George would confess nothing, though, in his own mind, he strongly suspected the Duke of Northumberland of the theft, *alias*, the fat gentleman with the fair curled hair, and the red cheeks hanging over his stock.

George went away up among his brethren of the awl in the Back Row, and called on them every one; but he soon perceived, from their blank looks, and their disinclination to drink that night, that they were all in the same predicament with himself. The fat gentleman with the curled hair had called on them every one, and got measure of a pair often-guinea boots, but had not paid any of them; and somehow or other, every man had lost the price of the boots which he had received in the morning. Who to blame for this, nobody knew; for the whole day over, and a good part of the night, from the time the proclamation was made, the Back Row of Selkirk was like a cried fair; all the idle people in the town and the country about were there, wondering after the man who had raised such a demand for boots. After all, the souters of Selkirk were left neither richer nor poorer than they were at the beginning, but every one of them had been four times called a souter to his face, a title of great obloquy in that town, although the one of all others that the townsmen ought to be proud of. And it is curious that they are proud of it, when used collectively; but apply it to any of them as a term of reproach, and you had better call him the worst name under heaven.

This was the truth of the story; and the feat was performed by the late Duke of Queensberry, when Earl of March, and two English noblemen, on a tour through this country. Every one of them gained his bet, through the simplicity of the honest souters; but certainly the last had a difficult part to play, having staked two hundred guineas that he would take all the money from the souters that they had received from the gentleman in the morning, and call every one of them souter to his face. He got the price entire from every one, save Thomas Inglis, who had drunk the half of his before he got to him; but this being proven, the English gentleman won.

George Dobson took the thing most amiss. He had been the first taken in all along, and he thought a good deal about it. He was moreover a very honest man, and in order to make up the boots to the full value of the money he had received, he had shod them with silver, which took two Spanish dollars, and he had likewise put four silver tassels to the tops, so that they were splendid boots, and likely to remain on his hand. In short, though he did not care about the loss, he took the hoax sore amiss, and thought a good deal about it.

Shortly after this, he was sitting in his shop, working away, and not singing a word, when in comes a fat gentleman, with fair curled hair, and red cheeks, but they were not hanging over his cravat; and he says, “Good morning, Dobson. You are very quiet and contemplative this morning.”

“Ay, sir, fo’ks canna be aye alike merry.

“Have you any stomach for taking measure of a pair of boots this morning?”

“Nah! I’ll take measure o’ nae mae boots to strangers; I’ll stick by my auld customers.”—He is very like my late customer, thought George, but his tongue is not the same. If I thought it were he, I would nick him.

"I have heard the story of the boots, George," says he, "and never heard a better one. I have laughed very heartily at it; and I called principally to inform you, that if you will call at Widow Wilson's, in Hawick, you will get the price of your boots."

"Thank you, sir," says George, and the gentleman went away; and then Dobson was persuaded he was not the Duke of Northumberland, though astonishingly like him. George had not sewed a single yerking, ere the gentleman comes again into the shop, and says, "You had better measure me for these boots, Dobson, I intend to be your customer in future."

"Thank you, sir, but I would rather not, just now."

"Very well, call then at Widow Wilson's, in Hawick, and you shall get *double* payment for the boots you have made." George thanked him again, and away he went; but in a very short space he enters the shop again, and again requested George to measure him for a pair of boots. George became suspicious of the gentleman, and rather uneasy, as he continued to haunt him like a ghost; and so, merely to be quit of him, he took the measure of his leg and foot. "It is very near the measure of these fine silver-mounted ones, sir," says George, "you had better just take them."

"Well, so be it," said the stranger. "Call at Widow Wilson's, in Hawick, and you shall have *triple* payment for your boots. Good day."

"O this gentleman is undoubtedly wrong in his mind," says George to himself. "This beats all the customers I ever met with! Ha—ha ha! Come to Widow Wilson's, and you shall have payment for your boots,—*double* payment for your boots,—*triple* payment for your boots! Oh! the man's as mad as a March hare! He—he—he—he!"

"Hilloa, George," cried a voice close at his ear, "what's the matter wi' ye? Are ye gaun daft? Are ye no gaun to rise to your wark the day?"

"Aich! Gudeness guide us, mother, am I no up yet?" cries George, springing out of his bed; for he had been all the while in a sound sleep, and dreaming. "What gart ye let me lie so long? I thought I had been i' the shop!"

"Shop!" exclaimed she; "I daresay then, you thought you had found a fiddle in't. What were ye gaffawing and laughing at?"

"O! I was laughing at a fat man, an' the payment of a pair o' boots at Widow Wilson's, in Hawick."

"Widow Wilson's, i' Hawick!" exclaimed the wife, holding up both her hands; "Gude forgie me for a great liar, if I hae dream'd about onybody else, frae the tae end o' the night to the tither."

"Houts, mother, haud your tongue; it is needless to heed your dreams, for ye never gie ower dreaming about somebody."

"An' what for no, lad? Hasna an auld body as good a right to dream as a young ane? Mrs Wilson's a through-gawn quean, and clears main than a hunder a-year by the tannage. I see warrant there sail something follow thin dreams; I get the maist o' my dreams redd."

"How can you say that, when it was but the other night you dreamed that Lord Alemoor brought you down in his wood, for a grey hen?"

"I xvat that was nae lee, lad; an' tuffed my feathers wed, when he had me down. There's nae saying what may happen. Geordie; but I wish your wing as wed fledged as a Mrs Wilson aneath it."

George was greatly tickled with his dream about the fat gentleman and the boots, and so well convinced was he that there was some sort of meaning in it, that he resolved to go to Hawick the next market day, and call on Mrs Wilson, and settle with her; although it was a week or two before his usual term of payment, he thought the money would scarcely come wrong. So that day

he plied and wrought as usual; but instead of his favourite ditties relating to the Forest, he chanted, the whole day over, one as old as any of them; but I am sorry I recollect only the chorus and a few odd stanzas of it.

SING ROUND ABOUT HAWICK, &c.

We'll round about Hawick, Hawick,  
Round about Hawick thegither;  
We'll round about Hawick, Hawick,  
And in by the bride's gudemither.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

And as we gang by we will rap,  
And drink to the luck o' the bigging;  
For the bride has her tap in her lap,  
And the bridegroom his tail in his rigging.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

There's been little luck i' the deed,  
We're a' in the dumps thegither;  
Let's gie the bridegroom a sheep's head,  
But gie the bride brose and butter.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

Then a' the gudewives i' the land  
Came flockin' in droves thegither,  
A' bringin' their bountith in hand,  
To please the young bride's gudemither.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

The black gudewife o' the Braes  
Gae baby-clouts no worth a button;  
But the auld gudewife o' Penchnice  
Came in wi' a shouder o' mutton.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

Wee Jean o' the Coate gae a pun',  
A penny, a plack, and a bodle;  
But the wife at the head o' the town  
Gae nought but a lang pin-todle.<sup>1</sup>  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

The mistress o' Bortugh cam ben,  
Aye blinkin' sac couthy an' canny:  
But some said she had in her han'

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<sup>1</sup> A pin-cushion. *Vide* Dr Jamieson.

A kipple o' bottles o' branny.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

And some brought dumplings o' woo,  
And some brought flitches o' bacon,  
And kebbucks and cruppocks enow;  
But Jenny Muirhead brought a capon.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

Then up came the wife o' the Mill,  
Wi' the cog, an' the meal, an' the water;  
For she likit the joke sae well  
To gie the bride brose and butter.  
Sing round about Hawick, &c.

And first she pat in a bit bread,  
And then she pat in a bit butter,  
And then she pat in a sheep's head,  
Horns an' a' thegither!

Sing round about Hawick, Hawick,  
Round about Hawick thegither;  
Round about Hawick, Hawick,  
Round about Hawick for ever.

On the Thursday following, George, instead of going to the shop, dressed himself in his best Sunday clothes, and, with rather a curious face, went ben to his step-mother, and inquired "what feck o' siller she had about her?"

"Siller! Gudeness forgie you, Geordie, for an evendown waster and a profligate! What are ye gaun to do wi' siller the day?"

"I have something ado owen at Hawick, an' I was thinking it wad be as wed to pay her account when I was there."

"Oho, lad! Are ye there wi' your dreams and your visions o' the night, Geordie? Ye're aye keen o' sangs, man; I can pit a vera gude ane i' your head. There's an unco gude auld thing they ca', 'Wap at the widow, my laddie.' D'ye ken it, Geordie? Siller! quo he! Hae ye ony feck o' siller, mother! Whew! I hae as muckle as will pay the widow's account sax times owen! Ye may tell her that frae me; and tell her that I bade you play your part as wed as old lucky could play her's. Siller! Lack-a-day! But, Geordie, my man—Auld wives' dreams are no to be regardit, ye ken. Eh?"

"Whisht now, mother, and mind the grey hen in the Haining wood."

"Heyti-teyti, you an' your grey hen! Stand ye to your tackle, billy. Dinna come owen soon hame at night; an' good luck to a' honest intentions."

After putting half a dozen pairs of trysted shoes, and the identical silver-mounted boots into the cadger's creels—then the only regular carriers—off set George Dobson to Hawick market, a distance of nearly eleven new-fashioned miles, but then accounted only eight and three quarters; and after parading the Sandbed, Slittenick Bridge and the Tower Knowe, for the space of an



hour, and shaking hands with some four or five acquaintances, he ventured east the gate to pay Mrs Wilson her account. He was kindly welcomed, as every good and regular customer was, by Mrs Wilson, who made it a point always to look after the one thing needful. They settled amicably, as they always had done before; and in the course of business George ventured several sly jocular hints, to see how they would be taken, vexed that his grand and singular dream should go for nothing. No, nothing would pass there but sterling cent per cent. The lady was deaf and blind to every effort of gallantry, valuing her own abilities too highly ever to set a man a second time at the head of her flourishing business. Nevertheless, she could not be blind to George's qualifications—he knew that was impossible,—for in the first place he was a goodly person, with handsome limbs and broad square shoulders; of a very dark complexion, true, but with fine shrewd manly features; was a burges and councillor of the town of Selkirk, and as independent circumstances as she was.

Very well; Mrs Wilson knew all this—valued George Dobson accordingly, and would not have denied him any of those good points more than Gideon Scott would to a favourite Cheviot tup, in any society whatever; but she had that sharp cold business-manner, that George could discover no symptoms where the price of the boots was to come from. In order to conciliate matters as far as convenient, if not even to stretch a point, he gave her a farther order, larger than the one just settled; but all that he elicited was thanks for his custom, and one very small glass of brandy; so he drank her health, and a good husband to her. Mrs Wilson only curtsied and thanked him coldly, and away George set west the street, with a quick and stately step, saying to himself that the expedition of the silver-mounted boots was all up.

As he was posting up the street, an acquaintance of his, a flesher, likewise of the name of Wilson, eyed him, and called him aside. “Hey, George, come this way a bit. How are ye? How d’ye do, sir? What news about Selkirk? Grand demand for boots there just now, I hear? Eli? Needing any thing in my way the day?—Nae beef like that about your town. Come away in, and taste the gudewife’s bottle. I want to hae a crack wi’ ye, and get measure of a pair o’ boots. The grandest story yon, sir, I ever heard. Eh? Needing a leg o’ beef?— Better? Never mind, come away in.”

George was following Mr Wilson into the house, having as yet scarcely got a word said, and he liked the man exceedingly, when one pulled his coat, and a pretty servant girl smirked in his face and said, “Maister Dabsen, thou mann cum awa vest the geate and speak till Mistress Wulsin; there’s sumtheyng forgwot atween ye. Thou mann cum directly.”

“Haste ye, gae away, nin!” says Wilson, pushing him out at the door, “that’s a better bait than a poor flesher’s dram. There’s some comings an’ gangings yonder. A bien birth and a thrifty dame. Grip to, grip to, lad! I’se take her at a hunder pund the quarter. Let us see you as ye come back again.

George went back, and there was Mrs Wilson standing in the door to receive him.

“I quite forgot, Mr Dobson I beg pardon. But I hope, as usual, you will take a family dinner with me to-day?”

“Indeed, Mrs Wilson, I was just thinking to mysell that you were fey, and that we two would never bargain again, for I never paid you an account before that I did not get the offer of my dinner.”

“A very stupid neglect! But, indeed, I have so many things to mind, and so hard set with the world, Mr Dobson; you cannot conceive, when there’s only a woman at the head of affairs

“Ay, but sic a woman,” said George, and shook his head.

“Well, well, come at two. I dine early. No ceremony, you know. Just a homely dinner, and no drinking.” So saying, she turned and sailed into the house very gracefully; and then turning aside, she looked out at the window after him, apostrophising him thus “Ay, ye may strut away west the street, as if I were looking after you. Shame fa’ the souter-like face o’ ye; I wish you had been fifty miles off the day! If it hadna been fear for affronting a good steady customer, ye shoudna hae been here. For there’s my brother coming to dinner, and maybe some o’ his cronies; and he’ll be sac ta’en wi’ this merry souter chield, that I ken wed they’ll drink main than twice the profits o’ this bit order. My brother mann hae a’ his am will too! Fo’ks maun aye bow to the bush they get bieid frae, else I should take a staup out o’ their punch cogs the night.”

George attended at ten minutes past two, to be as fashionable as the risk of losing his kale would permit—gave a sharp woer-like rap at the door, and was shown by the dimpling border maid into the ROOM,—which, in those days, meant the only sitting apartment of a house. Ms Wilson being absent about the dinner getting up, and no one to introduce the parties to each other, think of George’s utter amazement, and astonishment, and dumfounderment, for there is no term half strong enough to express it by,—when he saw the identical fat gentleman, who came to him thrice in his dream, and ordered him to come to Widow Wilson’s, and get payment of his boots. He was the very identical gentleman in every respect, every inch of him, and George could have known him among a thousand. It was not the Duke of Northumberland, but he that was so very like him, with fair curled hair, and red cheeks, which did not hang over his cravat. George felt as if he had been dropped into another state of existence, and knew hardly what to think or say. He had at first very nigh run up and taken the gentleman’s hand, and addressed him as an old acquaintance, but luckily he recollected the equivocal circumstances in which they met, which was not actually in the shop, but in George’s little bed-closet in the night, or early in the morning.

In short, the two sat awkward enough, till, at last, in came Mrs Wilson, in most brilliant attire, and really a handsome fine woman; and with her a country lady, with something in her face extremely engaging. Mrs Wilson immediately introduced the parties to each other thus: “Brother, this is Mr Dobson, boot and shoemaker in Selkirk; as honest a young man, and as good a payer as I know.

Mr Dobson, this is Mr Turnbull, my brother, the best friend I ever had, and this is his daughter Margaret.”

The parties were acquainted in one minute, for Mr Turnbull was a frank kind-hearted gentleman; ay, they were more than acquainted, for the very second or third look that George got of Margaret Turnbull, he loved her. And during the whole afternoon, every word that she spoke, every smile that she smiled, and every happy look that she turned on another, added to his flame; so that long ere the sun leaned his elbow on Skelfhill Pen, he was deeper in love than, perhaps, there ever was a souter in this world. It is needless to describe Miss Turnbull—she was *exquisite*, that is enough—just what a woman should be, and not exceeding twenty-five years of age. What a mense she would he to the town of Selkirk, and to a boot and shoemaker’s parlour, as well as to the top of the councillors’ seat every Sunday!

When the dinner was over, the brandy bottle went round, accompanied with the wee wee glass, in shape of the burr of a Scots thistle. When it came to Mr Turnbull, he held it up between him and the light,—“Keatie, whaten a niff-naff of a glass is that? let us see a feasible ane.”

“If it be over little, you can fill it the oftener, brother. I think a big dram is so vulgar!”

“That’s no the thing, Keatie. The truth is, that ye’re a perfect she Nabal, and ilka thing that takes the value of a plack out o’ your pocket, is vulgar, or improper, or something that way. But

I'll tell you, Keatie, my woman, what you shall do. Set down a black bottle on this hand o' me, and twa clear anes on this, and the cheeny bowl atween them, and I'll let you see what I'll do. I ken o' nane within the ports o' Hawick can afford a bowl better than you. Nane o' your half bottles and quarter bottles at a time; now Keatie, ye hae a confoundit trick o' that; but I hae some hopes that I'll learn ye good manners by and by."

"Dear brother, I'm sure you are not going to drink your bottles here. Think what the town would say, if I were to keep cabals o' drinkers in my sober house."

"Do as I bid you now, Keatie, and lippen the rest to me. Ah, she is a niggard, Mr Dobson, and has muckle need of a little schooling to open her heart."

The materials were produced, and Mr Turnbull, as had been predicted, did not spare them. There were other two Wilsons joined them immediately after dinner, the one a shoemaker, and the other our friend the flesher, and a merrier afternoon has seldom been in Hawick. Mr Turnbull was perfectly delighted with George;—he made him sing "The Souters o' Selkirk," "Turn the Blue Bonnets," and all his best things; but when he came to "Round about Hawick," he made him sing it six times over, and was never weary of laughing at it, and identifying the characters with those then living. Then the story of the boots was an inexhaustible joke, and the likeness between Mr Turnbull and the Duke of Northumberland an acceptable item. At length Mr Turnbull got so elevated, that he said, "Ay, man! and they are shod wi' silver, and silver tassels round the top? I wad gie a bottle o' wine for a sight o' them."

"It shall cost you nae mair," says George, and in three minutes he set them on the table. Mr Turnbull tried them on, and walked through and through the room with them, singing—

"With silver he was shod before—  
With burning gold behind."

They fitted exactly; and before sitting down, he offered George the original price, and got them.

It became late rather too soon for our group, but the young lady grew impatient to get home, and Mr Turnbull was obliged to prepare for going; nothing, however, would please him, save that George should go with him all night; and George being, long before this time, oven head and ears in love, accepted of the invitation, and the loan of the flesher's bay mare, and went with them. Miss Margaret had soon, by some kind of natural inspiration, discovered our jovial souter's partiality for her; and in order to open the way for a banter, the best mode of beginning a courtship, she fell on and rallied him most severely about the boots and the soutering, and particularly about letting himself be robbed of the two guineas. This gave George an opportunity of retaliating so happily, that he wondered at himself, for he acknowledged that he said things that he never believed he had the face to say to a lady before.

The year after that, the two were married in the house of Mrs Wilson, and Mr Turnbull paid down a hundred pounds to George on the day he brought her from that house a bride. Now, thought George to himself, I have been twice most liberally paid for my boots in that house. My wife, perhaps, will stand for the third payment, which I hope will be the best of all; but I still think there is to be another one beside. He was not wrong, for after the death of his worthy father-in-law, he found himself entitled to the third of his whole effects; the transfer of which, nine years after his marriage, was made over to him in the house of his friend, Mrs Wilson.