

THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE



A WINTER'S TALE

Robert Louis Stevenson

Suggestions for learning and teaching Scottish literature and language

Ronnie Renton

Set at the time of the Jacobite uprising, *The Master of Ballantrae* tells of a family divided. James Durie, Master of Ballantrae, abandons his ancestral home to support the Stuart cause – leaving his younger brother Henry, who is faithful to the Hanoverians, to inherit the title of Lord Durrisdere. But James returns years later, embittered by battles and a savage life of piracy on the high seas, to demand his inheritance. Turning the people against his brother, he begins a savage feud that will lead the pair from the South-West Lowlands of Scotland to the American wilderness. Satanic and seductive, *The Master of Ballantrae* was regarded by Stevenson as ‘all I know of the devil’; his darkly manipulative schemes dominate this subtle and compelling tragedy.

RANGE

- Advanced Higher Grade

KEY TEXTS

- *The Master of Ballantrae*, Robert Louis Stevenson (Modern Library Edition, 2002)
- *Scotnote: Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Master of Ballantrae and The Ebb-Tide*, Gerard Carruthers (ASLS, 2004)

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PREFACE

The 'editor' of the book returns to Edinburgh and goes to stay with Johnstone Thomson, W.S. (Writer to the Signet – a senior solicitor).

Johnstone Thomson tells the editor that he has a strange collection of papers to show him that have not been looked at for 100 years. It deals with deaths. It turns out that these are papers of the Durrisdeers:

“One of them was out in the '45; one had some strange passages with the devil ... and there was an unexplained tragedy ... about a hundred years ago ...”

The House of Durrisdeer has become overgrown and is closed up. The last lord, Henry Durie, died in 1820, and his sister Katharine in 1827.

Thomson explains that he has got hold of the papers as a result of a letter of the old lord. The papers are in the writing of someone called Mackellar and had been in the hands of a lawyer called McBrair. They are being opened in 1889 (but deal with events of 1789 and later.)

After they have read the collection of papers Thomson suggests that the editor fleshes it out for publication as a novel. The editor prefers to leave it as it is.

CHAPTER 1

Summary of Events During the Master's Wanderings

- Ballantrae is on the South-West coast of Scotland.
- Thomas of Ercildoune = Thomas the Rhymer, 13th century poet and prophet.

Mackellar opens by explaining that he had been with the Master of Ballantrae at his death. He also explains that he had been devoted to Mr Henry.

The history of the House of Durrisdeer had been turbulent but he is concentrating on the events surrounding the Jacobite Rising of 1745 – “When the foundations of this tragedy were laid”.

There were four people in the house:

- **Durie:** the old lord – a man of few words who sat at the chimney side.
- **James:** the Master – 24 years old when he fought in the '45 – a bon viveur and picaresque character. (cf. Alan Breck from *Kidnapped*)
- **Mr Henry:** a good worker, but dull. (cf. David Balfour from *Kidnapped*)
- **Alison Graeme** - kinswoman, wealthy orphan and destined to be the Master's wife – and she would have liked that (an arrangement acceptable “gladly enough on her side”. (p.9)

When Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) landed, the Master (James) wants to support him and the Jacobite cause. Mr Henry wants him to stay at home since he is the older brother and the heir. As the younger brother Henry feels he should be the one to go with Prince Charlie:

“I am the *cadet* and I SHOULD go”. (p.11)

Finally the matter is decided by the toss of a coin (p.11). James wins the right to go. Alison, in love with James and furious that he is leaving her, picks up the coin and throws it “clean through the family shield in the great painted window”.

So the Master rides north with a dozen retainers to join the Prince and Mr Henry offers his sword to King George's government, pledging his loyalty to the House of Hanover. Mr Henry and his father are true to Hanover, and the Master rides by Bonnie Prince Charlie's side.

After Culloden news comes to Durrisdeer via Tam Macmorland that there is only one survivor of those who had gone from Durrisdeer to fight for the prince. Alison is very upset and blames everyone, especially Mr Henry, for James's death. She is clearly in love with James. The old lord's conscience is stricken because he realises he has treated James as favourite and now tries to make up to Mr Henry.

The old man tries to set up a marriage between Henry and Alison (he needs her money). Alison was unlikely to marry Henry – but his UNPOPULARITY with the local people brought about her marriage to him. Tam Macmorland was the sole survivor of the Durrisdeer “volunteers”: he accused Henry of not sending more volunteer soldiers to support them.

People shun Henry. They say he promised them more soldiers (a lie!) As he is abused by the people, so the Master is praised. Then finally a woman whom the Master used to have his way with also accuses Henry of violence to her.

Later Henry, the old lord and Alison go to an election in St Bride's. When they get there Henry is abused by the locals and called Judas. Alison tells the old lord:

“If Henry still wants me ... he can have me now”. (p.17)

Then she tells Henry that she will marry him but cannot love him.

1st June 1748 – day of their marriage

December 1748 Mackellar takes up his post – (and his scandal-mongering?) and he will now tell the story as he sees it.

CHAPTER 2

Summary of Events (continued)

Mackellar comes to Durrisddeer. Patey Mcmorland (10 years old) is his guide to the house. On the way there the boy tells Mackellar all the legends of the place – and even at this stage there are slanders against Henry Durie.

As soon as Mackellar comes into the hall he sees the clear glass where the window with the arms shield has been broken. He meets the old lord sitting by the fire. Mrs Durie comes in, six weeks to go in pregnancy.

Mackellar works for Mr Henry. He works well for him and Mr Henry eventually praises him and lets him get on with his work with little interference. One day when he sees the freetraders on the sand he tells Mackellar he wishes he were one of them rather than who he is. (p.20)

Henry was depressed and it was the shadow that the Master, his brother, cast over him that depressed him. People always compared him unfavourably to James. It was assumed by this time, of course, that James was dead (killed at Culloden). The old lord was by now much kinder to Henry but it was clear that his love was still for James. (pp.22, 23)

Mackellar gets an insight into the family affairs when he takes a pension to Jessie Brown which Henry sends her in reparation for the fact that the Master had put her in the family way. Instead of gratitude Henry gets contempt. (p.24)

Henry and his father make sure that Alison hears nothing of the Master's involvement with Jessie Brown because that would upset her as she is still known to be in love with the Master. (p.26)

The old lord and Mrs Henry are very close. They completely exclude Henry. In the evenings they talk together at the fire and Henry has to sit at table, away from them. They talk of the Master.

When Henry has to get the window repaired his wife (who has married him out of duty/pity) is angry. (She wants it left broken because it is a memorial to the Master the way it is).

His wife treats Henry like dirt yet he is devoted to her. (p.28). This was the state of affairs until **7th April 1749**.

Francis Burke comes to the house first making sure that as a Jacobite he will be safe at Durrisddeer. After this he tells Mackellar that he is Colonel Francis Burke, one of Prince Charles Edward's Irishmen. He asks to speak to Mackellar's 'Masters' i.e. his social superiors.

Mackellar introduces him to Henry, Alison and the old lord. He knows about Alison already:

"I address the seductive Miss Alison, of whom I have so often heard". (p.30)

He tells them that the Master is alive and in Paris. Alison becomes faint at the news.

Burke produces three letters – one for each of them. Mrs Henry directs her letter to Henry. Eventually Henry takes her letter. He helps her to her room and asks her to read the letter there. The next morning the letter was still unread. (Henry behaved very well, Mackellar notes, in all this).

Mackellar then explains that, long after this incident, he sent to Burke asking him for a written account of what he told them that night about the Master and his journeys. This is the introduction to the next section "The Master's Wanderings". (Ch.3)

In Ch.3 it is very important to note the attitude of the narrator Burke.

Although he is indebted to the Master he clearly has no admiration for him and thinks him a bad person. This is very important because it confirms Mackellar's view of him. (Mackellar is often considered to be an unreliable narrator!)

CHAPTER 3.

The Master's Wanderings (Colonel Burke's Memoirs)

The Master and Burke flee after Culloden. He and Burke are not great friends but they spin a coin whether to fight or be friends. They spin the coin and it "fell for peace".

They come upon the sea-shore and a boat with an Irish skipper "Sainte-Marie-des-Anges". Burke wants to wait for their friends to take them abroad but the Master tells the captain about the defeat at Culloden. The Captain cuts the cable and they sail at once.

They keep low in the cabin for three days. Then the wind gets up and they are tossed at sea for the last two days.

Then they are boarded by the crew of the *Sarah*, captained by Teach (**not** the original Blackbeard). Ballantrae and Burke are taken aboard as crew. The rest of their colleagues walk the plank. The *Sarah* is a drunken rummy most of the time, "a floating Bedlam".

They encounter a King's ship, i.e. a Naval vessel. They flee, just getting away and no more. Teach now looks deranged and murders one of the crew. Then the Master of Ballantrae intervenes and takes over the ship. (p.42) and is made quartermaster. Ballantrae prefers to keep Teach as nominal captain because he can order him about. (p.42)

12–15 months of piracy. Burke finds it nauseating work killing innocent people. He admits, however, that Ballantrae coped very well. Most of the time the crew spent calculating their profits – which are often very little since most of the ships had little cash and their cargoes are irrelevant to the pirates.

After two of their gunners have been killed in an attempt to capture another ship they decide to make for the shore to divide the spoils and go their separate ways. Then, after 10 days, just as they are getting near land they come close to a cruiser. Ballantrae gets the crew drunk on drugged liquor. He and three others (i.e. Burke, Grady and Dutton) bind Teach to the mast to be the object of the crew's revenge when they come to. The four of them take all the booty they can from the ship.

The four escape on a skiff. They hear one of the cruiser's boats pass nearby. They get ashore onto very swampy ground. They try to move inland. Grady gets tired carrying his pack (and Dutton's because he was navigating). He is swallowed in the swamp. (p.52) Then Dutton gets into trouble in the swamp. The Master pretends to help him and then stabs him between the shoulders. (p.53)

Ballantrae tells Burke that Dutton was no longer needed; he was only a pirate. (p.53)

Next day Burke quarrels with the Master because of the killings. Ballantrae proves so very selfish. (p.54) Dutton and Grady were merely being used by him. Before the quarrel gets worse a stranger appears and distracts them. They decide to move and come in sight of a creek in which a small vessel is moored. The captain of this trading vessel is persuaded (reluctantly) to take them aboard after taking their weapons from them. The ship takes them past New York and up the Hudson river to Albany.

They find the town of Albany in turmoil. Scalps are being brought in etc (p.57) The Indians in the area are on the war path. A young man called Chew comes to their aid and helps them escape by canoe.

They move up the Hudson by canoe to Lake Champlain where the French have a stronghold but Chew dies and they are now very much on their own. The Master now becomes more and more bossy and dictatorial. After three days their canoe gets holed and they have to leave it. (They have been carrying it from one stream to another in order not to attract attention by staying in the main river). They prepare to carry as much of their goods as possible including the **treasure** from the ship.

The Master falls into despair and blames Henry for his plight.

"He sits in my place, he bears my name, he courts my wife; and I am here alone with a damned Irishman in this tooth-chattering desert!" (p.63)

(He is, of course, not married to Alison.)

Earlier he had also told Burke when they came in sight of New York that

"if all had their rights, he was now in sight of his own prosperity, for Miss Graeme enjoyed a large estate in the province."

(– but of course he did not marry Alison Graeme!)

All major decisions after this are made by the Master on the toss of a coin. A tribe of Indians is seen nearby. The Master is scared and he tosses the coin again.

At this point Mackellar takes over the manuscript. He tells that the Master and Burke separate. Eventually they both get to Fort Frederick. The Master has buried the treasure and made a map of how to get to it.

Burke welcomes him to Fort Frederick **like a brother**. Mackellar thinks that Burke is too generous in his estimation of the Master. (p.64)

CHAPTER 4

Persecutions Endured by Mr Henry

Henry tells Mackellar that the Master wants money. Mackellar tells Henry that they can't afford to support him. Henry feels he has no rights to the estate (as younger son) and has to send the Master what money he can. Mackellar considers that "This is midsummer madness". (p.67)

The Master really abuses Henry in his letters and accuses him of niggardliness: "I know you are a niggardly dog." (p.68)

Mackellar accompanies Burke to the boat which will take him back to the Master.

Mackellar now has to raise a new loan to keep the estate afloat. Mrs Henry is now much more pleasant to her husband but he is edgy and unpleasant to her. When asked he gives still more money to the Master via the free-traders. The estate is brought to its knees. (p.70)

For seven years the Master got money. This put tremendous strain on Henry's marriage with Alison. Even their annual trip to Edinburgh had to be cancelled because he couldn't afford it. Henry wants to show the Master how generous he can be but Mackellar can take it no more and goes to Alison to explain that Henry has given the Master £8,000. She had no idea he was getting that!

It was, as a result, as if Mrs Henry has made up with her husband. The next letter to the Master has no money attached. (p.73) Things seem better all round but the Master is still clearly on Alison's mind.

Mackellar said he could never trust women. Then a letter arrived from the Chevalier de Burke in France (12:07:1756). This letter explains that the Master has been imprisoned in the Bastille and needs more money. The Master now wants to go to India.

Soon after this Mackellar (nicknamed 'Square Toes' by the local smugglers) sees a lugger has arrived off the

shore. He goes down to watch it and remains hidden in the vegetation. A man (the Master) alights. (p.77)

The Master spots Mackellar and recognises him – although he has never actually met him before. He tells him to take his luggage to the House. (p.79)

It finally dawns on Mackellar that the man is the Master and he entreats him not to go further. Then he runs ahead of him to warn the others in the House that the Master has arrived. Mr Henry and Mackellar go back to meet the Master. Henry is not happy at all but tries to be welcoming.

“I would fain make you as welcome as I can in the house of our fathers.”

“Or in *my* house? or *yours*?” says the Master (he is stirring up trouble!) (p.81)

Mackellar then goes to get the Master’s luggage and gets back to find the Master has taken his place at table. The Master gives him his place and another is set for him. The Master proceeds to charm the company. (p.83)

The Master seems to be a good guy at this point. Then Mackellar says he sees his “PERFIDY”. The Master says the estate now belongs to Henry but that he must not “grudge” him “a place beside my father’s fire”. The old man then says that Henry is the equivalent of the **elder** brother in the parable of the prodigal son. (This makes Henry look as if he is in the wrong – which he is not!) (p.84)

The Master is pleasant to Mackellar in public but nasty to him in private. He is even more like this to Henry who, therefore, gets a bad press publicly. Mackellar analyses the cunning of the Master. The Master is smooth; Mr Henry is gauche. (p.86) The Master also exploited the peril in which he was supposed to stand as a wanted Jacobite. He actually taunts Mr Henry with the ability to denounce him to the Hanoverian Government. (Indeed it seems strange that no attempt to arrest him has taken place.) Mackellar himself feels he cannot denounce him because of the consequences this would have with the Old Lord and Mr Henry. (p.87)

The Master gets into difficulty when Jessie Brown seeks his attention. He eventually has to compensate her by setting her up in business as the owner of a public house. (She had his child!) The Master asked Mackellar to remove her at one point but he refused – and received Mr Henry’s support.

The Master gets himself into Mrs Henry’s good grace by singing theatrically a Jacobite song in which a girl declares her loyalty to her Jacobite exiled lover.

Then the Master shows greater affection for Katharine, Henry’s little girl, and this makes matters worse between Henry and his wife.

The Master, however, was only staying to get money for his next expedition. To raise money for the Master Henry actually breaks the entail on a piece of land (Ochterhall) and sells it. But still he did not leave.

Eventually the Master is rumbled. The Master clearly has been pardoned by the Government (p.96) and is a Government spy. Even this he manages to twist and suggests that his father had fixed it up. He is completely two faced. (p.97)

The father is of course happy that the Master is safe and the Master bounces back to his self-confident self.

At first Mrs Henry is cold to the Master because he is a turncoat but he wins her round too.

They become very close again and he develops his great friendship with Henry and Alison’s little girl, Katharine.

Mr Henry debates what to do about all this.

Mackellar suggests that Henry speak plainly about all this to the Old Lord – but he won’t because he knows he will worsen relations with his wife and father.

Henry diagnoses his problem as simply that he has no charisma and he is NOT LOVED. But he also tells Mackellar that he will have to do something – but what?

CHAPTER 5

Account of all that passed on the Night of February 27th 1757

It is a cold, freezing night and very still. They were playing cards until late. Alison and the old lord had gone to bed. The Master had drunk a lot and started insulting Henry for being such a colourless bore. He then tells Henry that Alison still prefers him. Henry can take it no more and strikes the Master. Then **Mackellar** says: “The Master sprang to his feet like one transfigured: **I had never seen the man so beautiful.** ‘A blow!’ he cried. ‘I could not take a blow from God almighty.’” (p.103)

After this the Master wants a duel. They take swords. Mackellar tries to stop them fighting but the Master threatens him with his sword and Mackellar starts to cry like a baby. (p.104) They go to the shrubbery, Mackellar taking two candles with him. The atmosphere is very still. More insults are exchanged and the Master tells Henry that if he (the Master) loses the whole family will want revenge for him (i.e. Henry can’t win).

They start to fight. The Master is definitely losing. The Master then tries foul play but ends up with a sword through him. Mackellar ascertains that he is dead. Henry is stunned and runs off to the house. The body is left abandoned by both Mackellar and Henry.

In the house Henry is useless. He can't bring himself to tell his father what has happened. Mackellar goes to Alison's room and tells her he needs her help. He explains there has been a duel. He tries to make Alison say she is to blame for the rivalry between the brothers. Then he reveals that the Master is dead. He explains there had been a duel and the Master used foul play. He tells her to go and look after her husband. He will go and tell the old lord. (p.111)

Mackellar goes to the old lord's room and prepares to tell him what has happened. Before revealing the Master's death he tells the old lord how Henry was reviled by the Master (when nobody else was about!) The old man wants to make it up to Henry. Mackellar says he has been "abused by a devilish dissembler". (p.113)

The old lord realises there has been a fight. Mackellar tells him it was in the shrubbery and that he had left the Master lying there. The old lord goes to the window. They hear the sound of a rowing boat in the bay – the free traders are there!

Mackellar makes for the shrubbery. One candle is still lit. No sign of the body. He goes back to the house and meets Alison. He and Alison go back and search again but the body is definitely not there. She can see bloodstains certainly. Alison is genuinely upset. She tries to comfort Henry but he will not speak to her.

Mackellar reports this to the old lord. He thinks the free traders have taken the Master – but he may be dead or alive. (p.116) The old lord wants to avoid scandal falling on the House of Durrisdeer. They go to Henry who breaks down and apologises to his father and his wife for having failed them.

Mackellar and the old Lord revisit the shrubbery and find evidence that the body has definitely been taken by the free traders. The old man devises the plan that Mackellar packs and conceals the Master's belongings to suggest he has left under cover of darkness (thus saving the House of Durrisdeer from scandal). When Mackellar goes to the Master's room it looks as if he has been getting ready to depart. In fact the boat had come to pick him up according to a prearranged plan. (The only problem is whether he is dead or alive.)

Mackellar is fairly sure the Master is alive. He wants to have something to use against the Master. He searches his bags and finds reports to the English Secretary – incriminating evidence.

Eventually it came to light that the Master survived – and years later it was discovered that he asked to be taken aboard the lugger and was put ashore at Havre de Grace. He never told the free traders about the duel. He probably did not want it to be known that he had been vanquished by a man he despised.

CHAPTER 6

Summary of Events During the Master's Second Absence (p.122)

Henry is very ill as a result of the duel and he lies raving in his bed, watched by Mackellar and Mrs Henry, but he never in his raving mentions his family, only financial affairs etc. Mackellar wants Mrs Henry to think well of her husband and tries to write her a letter explaining how the Master has wronged him. He eventually shows her correspondence with the Master. They show the Master's malevolent behaviour. However, letters between the Master and the Under Secretary of State (which would prove him a double-dealer) are missing. (p.125) Mrs Henry has burned them. She says: "It is enough, it is too much, that you and I have seen them." (p.125)

Mrs Henry says she did this for the honour of the family. She also says, papers or no papers, the Master cannot be stopped coming back because he is the "rightful heir". (p.126) Mackellar pledges his loyalty to the House of Durrisdeer.

Mr Henry starts to get better. It is uncertain if Henry had any recollection of the duel with his brother and how he "killed" him. Mr Henry now shows real affection for his wife and she reciprocates. Although he gets better Henry now finds it very difficult to concentrate on things. He is not mad but he has changed. If he could not get rid of a worry he had to annihilate its cause. He could not endure mental suffering. But it was not possible to tell how he viewed the "killing" of his brother. Mackellar had no idea until Henry one day asked him where he (Mackellar) had buried the Master. (p.129)

Mackellar tells Henry he thinks the Master was carried off unconscious by smugglers and that he was probably alive. (p.130) Henry believes that James is immortal and he will come back for him:

"He is not mortal. He is bound upon my back to all eternity – to all God's eternity." (p.130)

Henry is sure he will return.

Mackellar realises that he, Henry and Mrs Henry all wish that Mr Henry had killed the Master. (p.131)

Mackellar tells us that the old lord is declining rapidly. He makes Mackellar his executor. He is very kindly in his last days. He dies quietly. (p.132)

Henry takes his father's death calmly. He is also delighted to accede to the title of Lord Durrisdeer. Henry now dotes on his son Alexander.

When Alexander is 7 or 8 years old Mackellar recalls seeing Henry showing Alexander the place of the duel in the shrubbery:

“I have just been telling Sandie the story of this place, and how there was a man whom the devil tried to kill, and how near he came to kill the devil instead.” (p.134)

(N.B. James is described here as ‘the devil’.)

Mackellar says they should be grateful Henry survived (and, therefore, Alexander who was born later.) Henry prays that God will smite James. (p.135) Mackellar reminds him that Christians should forgive one another.

Henry then pushes Mackellar asking him if he genuinely forgives James. Mackellar admits he does not:

“God forgive me, I do not.” (p.136)

Henry now neglects his wife. She bears the situation well. She spends most of her time with her daughter Katharine and Mackellar. They feared that Alexander might turn out like James as a result of Henry’s dotting on him.

Mackellar plucks up the courage to tell Henry that he was in danger of making his son like James. At this Henry collapses in shock. When he comes to he seems very fragile but also very kind. (p.139)

Mrs Henry is furious at Mackellar for his interference. He is sorry. She understands, however, why he did interfere. But Henry, she says, “can bear no more”. (p.140) She blames Mackellar for the cruelty of his censure of Mr Henry and then calls Mackellar “an old maid.”

Finally we learn that in the next memoir we will hear of James on his travels in India and of Secundra Dass and the fact that he could speak English – if only they had known!

CHAPTER 7

Adventures of Chevalier Burke in India (Extracted from his Memoirs)

Somewhere in India there has been fighting or a melee of some sort in which Burke is involved. He is on the run. He is accompanied by a cipaye. He saves Burke. They go over a wall and into a garden. The house seemed to belong to a white man. They move towards the house and see two men on the verandah dressed in muslin. It turns out that one of these is the Master. Burke thinks his problems are over when he sees him but the Master does not reply to him and, indeed, the other man, Secundra Dass, tells Burke that the Master has no English. (p.143) Eventually Dass pulls a pistol and Burke and his companion leave.

As they depart Dass makes jibes on behalf of the Master at Burke, and the Master smiles. Burke and his companion retreat.

The Master may have been levelling an old score with Burke.

CHAPTER 8

The Enemy in the House

In April 1764 (18 years after Culloden) Mackellar gets up in the morning to hear voices in the hall speaking a foreign language. There are two men sitting there: The Master and Secundra Dass.

Mackellar is much more confident in dealing with the Master now. He also notices that the Master is aging. Henry comes in and requests that he be addressed as “Lord Durrisdeer”. He too is more confident in dealing with the Master. (p.148)

Henry sends John Paul, the servant, away from Durrisdeer because he has been friendly to the Master. Henry is determined to seem unruffled by the Master’s arrival. (p.149) Mackellar goes to Mrs Henry to tell her the news that the Master has arrived.

Mrs Henry decides that they must all leave at once for New York. (p.149) The Master, however, is permitted stay on at Durrisdeer. Mackellar will also stay with him to safeguard Henry’s interests. Henry, however, refuses to leave Durrisdeer. (p.150)

Mackellar sees Henry alone and persuades him to change his mind and leave for New York, pointing out how his wife and family deserve this consideration. **Henry then changes his mind.** He calls his wife and tells her that he will do what she and Mackellar want. (p.152)

The two groups meet next morning. Henry’s family keep their distance from the Master and Dass. Mackellar says that James looks like Satan in *Paradise Lost* – grave and splendid. (p.153) Mackellar later tells James he will be packed off once he has (inevitably) disgraced himself again. The Master tells Mackellar off for his impudence and threatens revenge.

Then the lawyer, Mr Carlyle, comes and arrangements are made for the management of the estate once the family have left. (p.155)

At the end of the interview with the lawyer, Henry wishes James “in hell”. (p.156)

Mackellar can see how worked up Henry is and knows that for the sake of his health the family must leave for America.

James starts to worm his way into the family’s problems and Mackellar spots that he will soon try to win over the loyalty and affection of young Alexander. This would be disastrous and this makes Mackellar even more willing to get the family away.

Preparations are made for leaving whilst an eye is kept on the Master and Secundra Dass. (p.158) The family leave secretly at night by a postern gate and go to two carriages waiting for them a quarter of a mile away. (p.159) A final signal from the departing carriage by

lantern and the family leave Durrisdeer and Scotland for good. (p.159) Mackellar and Macconochie are left alone. (p.160)

Next morning the Master discovers that there are only the three of them left: Mackellar, Secundra Dass and himself. Mackellar cannot tell the Master where the family has gone to but he does tell the Master that he can have bed and board. BUT no money – to the Master's chagrin. (p.160)

The Master revels in the power – Henry and family have fled because of his appearance! He says he will find their destination within a week and he will then track them down and

“I shall see then whether my Lord Durrisdeer ... will choose to buy my absence; and you will all see whether, by that time, I decide for profit or revenge.” (p.163)

Secundra has been watching them. Mackellar is sure he has no English.

Mackellar and the Master seem to be getting on well now. Indeed the atmosphere is very friendly. But Mackellar has been lulled into a false sense of security and has become less vigilant. Secundra Dass has been eavesdropping and it seems to have been through him that the Master has learned of the whereabouts of the family. (p.165)

Suddenly the Master announces that they are leaving for New York. Mackellar will have to pay his expenses if he wishes to come too. The Master says he intends to be “victorious”. (p.166)

The chaise will come to the door at 7 a.m. next morning. Mackellar is ready to go but foresees disaster for someone in this journey – probably the Master. (p.167) The Master mocks him. Mackellar sees desolation and disaster for the House of Durrisdeer.

CHAPTER 9

Mackellar's Journey with the Master

Mackellar, the Master and Secundra Dass take melancholy leave of Durrisdeer. A sense of doom fills Mackellar,

“or was it some pre-vision of the end?” (p.168)

Mackellar has to ride on the seat outside the cabin of the chaise and gets very wet. While there he has a haunting vision of Mr Henry in despair. (p.169)

They reach Glasgow and get aboard a ship, a very rotten craft called the *Nonesuch*, which will take them to America. The captain's name is McMurtrie. Mackellar is very unwell on the voyage but the Master is actually very nice to him. The Master reads *Clarissa*

and Mackellar reads the Bible. The Master sees these simply as entertainment, not as books of any significance (p.171–172) and Mackellar starts to see the Master as a “cardboard cut-out” with no physical substance and this makes him dread him. Even, however, although Mackellar does not like the Master, the Master seems to like his company.

The weather gets wild and the crew get restive and difficult. A storm really brews. Mackellar feels that if he is to drown it is worth it if the Master drowns also because he is so evil. (P.173–174)

(Prayer) “But, lo! here is Thy servant ready, his mortal weakness laid aside. Let me give my life for the creatures; take the two of them, Lord! take the two and have mercy on the innocent!”

Secundra Dass hears Mackellar's prayer. The Captain, however, believes that Mackellar's prayers have saved the ship and thanks him.

The wind drops but the seas are huge. The Master and Mackellar are sitting near the side of the ship. With the heaving of the sea the Master is alternately above and below Mackellar's line of vision. (p.175) The Master tells Mackellar the fable of the count and the baron. (p.176)

The count hates the baron – but he keeps his hatred secret from the baron. He tells that one day the count entered a door in a mountainside in Italy. It was dark and he almost fell through a rotten barrier into a deep well. He then tells the baron he had dreamed about him being in this place. The baron is naturally tantalised and wants to know more. He tells the baron that in his dream he saw him go into the cave and there he received a “Communication”. Then he says he woke up and couldn't give any more information. Soon after they pass near the place. The baron takes the bait and goes back on his own and presumably falls down the well and dies. The Master asks the question:

“And, now, was that a murder?” (p.179)

The Master emphasised to Mackellar that the count hated the baron with a great hatred. Mackellar feels the same way towards the Master and, now, when the ship heaves, he tries to kick the Master overboard. But the Master escapes the attempt. Then Mackellar agrees to make no more attempts on the Master during the voyage. They shake hands on this. (pps.179-180)

In spite of this the Master praises Mackellar for his fidelity to Mr Henry: “The old wife has blood in his body after all!” (p.182)

The Master then says, if Mackellar had known him when he was young, he would have been just as loyal to

him as he now is to Henry. The Master keeps on in this theme. Mackellar tells him he will believe him if he gives up his present commitment to vengeance and destruction of the family and returns to Durrisdeer:

“Give up your present purpose and return with me to Durrisdeer; then I will believe you.” (p.183)

The Master says he is involved in a cause which he is committed to and cannot give up. Mackellar replies that he simply wants “some dirty money.” (p.183)

The Master is always able to justify himself. Mackellar at one point tells him that

“Your brother is a good man and you are a bad one – neither more nor less.” (p.184)

The Master says, nevertheless, he is a good tyrant. He treats Secundra like a son and asks Mackellar to join him. He then asserts he would spare the family

“if they would beg his indulgence publicly on their bended knees.” (p.184)

Mackellar and the Master have regular virtual jousts, but now they get on well together. The Master actually looks after Mackellar when he is ill. Mackellar actually thinks the Master feels genuine kindness towards him.

They reach New York. The Master bids Mackellar farewell. He tells him he could charm a person when he wanted to. But now they are back at war. He tells Mackellar to warn the family that he is dangerous. (p.186)

CHAPTER 10

Passages at New York

Mackellar leaves the ship without the Master’s knowledge and finds the house in New York where Henry and his family are resident. Henry had been expecting him (and the Master). However, he had got anxious at the time they had taken to get there and thought they been drowned. Mackellar says it would have been better for Henry if he had (i.e. because the Master would have been drowned too.)

Henry says he is ready for the Master. Public opinion is already against him in New York: he is suspected of having murdered a man called Chew. People will not be surprised if he is excluded from Henry’s family. He, however, himself will speak to him:

“As for myself, I make so much exception for a brother that he may speak to me. I should lose my pleasure else,” says my lord, rubbing his palms. (p.188 – notice the hubris here: he is pushing his revenge too far).

The Master then appears. Henry is with the Governor and other dignitaries. Alison takes the children away.

The brothers have an unpleasant exchange of greetings. Henry tells the Master that the Governor will stretch the law to punish any interference from him. The Master now claims to be Lord Durrisdeer and entitled to all Henry’s money etc. Mackellar condemns the Master’s claim. The Governor backs up Henry. (p.189)

Henry then gives the Master the choice of returning home (which he will finance) or of staying in New York on basic subsistence money which he will give him. [This is of doubtful wisdom and is asking for trouble.] If he stays there is the condition that he must not speak to any of his family. The Master takes the pittance. He also says that Henry has a cloven hoof. (p.190 – note the diabolical image.)

The Master turns out not to be helpless when it comes to making money. Secundra Dass is a goldsmith and can make a living for them, but his anger at his treatment at his arrival makes him more determined to get revenge on Henry. By subjecting himself to being a public spectacle he hopes to bring shame on Henry. He takes a small hut (p.191) for his residence and advertises himself as a tailor. He does no work but merely wishes to be a source of public reproach to Henry. Some of the locals now turn against Henry. (p.192)

Henry, on the other hand, seems very content and is getting fat. Only when Mackellar is teaching Alexander does Mackellar not know what Henry is doing every day, so he changes his tuition time to see what Henry does then. He trails him one day. It turns out that Henry goes on a morning walk in front of the Master’s hut and gloats at him. Then later Henry actually sits beside his brother – but they never exchange a word. Henry indulges his hatred in this way. Mackellar warns him that this will destroy him. This behaviour will goad the Master “to some extremity.” (p.195)

Henry, however, thinks he is winning:

“To the contrary; I am breaking his spirit” says my lord. (p.195)

(Notice how the character of Henry is changing. He is becoming spiteful and devious.)

Henry keeps up the practice. Then one day the Master starts to laugh. (p.195) He tells Henry that he has won. If he gives him the money, he will leave New York and go in search of the treasure he had previously left in America. Henry does not reply but goes away. Mackellar urges him to accept the deal. Henry will not budge. Mackellar smells real trouble:

“There was never a man made, and the Master the least of any, that could accept so long a series of insults. The air smelt blood to me. And I vowed there should be no neglect of mine if, through any chink of possibility, crime could be yet turned aside.” (p.197)

He tries to prevent trouble by trying to borrow the money from Henry to pay for the Master’s journey. Henry refuses. He then tries to raise the money directly from home. He then goes to the Master with the deal. The Master will not take it. But he tells Mackellar he admires his honesty. He concludes by saying that he is capable of having great success in life but he will abandon that for “only one thing” [Presumably Revenge on Henry.] He warns Mackellar lest he gets crushed when the “roof falls” (p.199)

The end of Henry is forecast when mention is made of a ship carrying pamphlets to Henry. Henry reads them and then goes into a rage and locks himself away. His madness seems to have taken hold. Henry looks, on this occasion, as he did in Mackellar’s vision of him, except that he is furious instead of in despair. They send Alexander to knock his father’s door. He seems to have calmed down.

He comes out and tells Mackellar to deliver a note to a Captain Harris in a tavern in the port. Harris comes to visit Henry and stays long into the night.

Next day Mackellar sees Henry leave for town with £100 in his pocket. After that Henry stayed on his own property until he left for Albany. A pamphlet, we are told, was the cause of this distress. It was discovered on his dead body later. It said that the Master of Ballantrae is to have his title registered, but, even more important, Alexander is to be disinherited.

“Doubtless the mere mention of Mr Alexander, and the threat directly held out against the child’s succession, precipitated that which had so long impended.” (p.204)

A week after the pamphlets came Mackellar sees Harris leaving the Master’s hut. Later that night Henry told Mackellar they were leaving for Albany next day. A visit to Henry from Captain Harris precipitated that journey.

CHAPTER 11

Journey in the Wilderness

Mackellar and Henry get to Albany. Henry gives Mackellar lots of work to do to take his attention away from himself. Mackellar learns that Harris and Mountain, the trader, have gone up river ahead of them and that Mountain had come ashore for supplies at Albany.

None of the rest of Harris’s party had come ashore but they seemed anxious to get to their destination before the snows came. Mackellar worried that Henry has got involved with brigands like Harris and Mountain. He knows that they have gone to get “ill-gotten treasures” (p.206) and that foul play is likely. He is afraid that the Master might get killed (he has some sympathy for him) but is also afraid of landing Henry in trouble, so he does nothing since this seems the safer course.

They stay on at Albany. Henry continues to give work to Mackellar to absorb his attention. Mackellar compares himself to Michael Scott, the wizard, (i.e. he could be Henry’s familiar spirit just as Secundra Dass is the Master’s.) Henry is now completely paranoid and thinks everyone is against him. He is frequently very drunk.

Mackellar tells Henry off for drinking too much – if only for his son’s sake. Clearly Henry is deteriorating very much. One night he comes in dead drunk and sings again and again the last couplet of “The Twa Corbies”:

“And over his banes when they are bare
The wind sall blaw for evermair.”

(Clearly a reference to what he hopes will happen to the Master.)

Mackellar reprimands him and tells him he is selfish. He does not care about his wife and child and has never written to them. This sobers him up and he cries and starts a letter to them next day.

Henry is continually thinking of Harris and Mountain and their vengeful mission (to murder the Master) and he wants to go and see what is happening.

Sir William Johnston, soldier and diplomat in Indian affairs, is going on an expedition north. He takes Henry and Mackellar with him as observers. The land and river are desolate – signs of Indian activity and unrest. Mackellar, thinking of his own position says:

“I could never depict the blackness of my soul upon this journey.” (p.212)

Henry is obsessed with looking for signs of his brother. Sir William thinks he is unhinged and regrets taking him with them.

Then one bitterly, bitterly cold night Mackellar cannot sleep and he hears a cry. The sentries are alerted and everyone else awakes and they spot Mountain coming towards them. He asks if they have seen Secundra Dass. They have not. Mountain says:

“But what takes him back?” . . . What takes the man back among dead bodies? There is some damned mystery here.” (p.214)

Mackellar then says what we will now get is a narrative which he has edited from:

- (1) Mountain's carefully edited written statement
- (2) Two conversations with Secundra Dass
- (3) Many conversations with Mountain.

Narrative of the Trader, Mountain

The crew that went up the river under the joint command of Captain Harris and the Master were thugs. The Master thought he was in charge but the others were laughing at him behind his back. Finally he realises the situation when he finds out that they know that Secundra is eavesdropping on them. Harris, however, understands Hindustani and he eavesdrops later on the Master and Secundra. He is furious when he finds out that Secundra understands English and he learns of their conspiracy against the Master, and, indeed, that Secundra and the Master are going to flee from them. (p.216)

Some of them wanted to kill the Master there and then but others thought that they should keep watching him to get some clue as to where the treasure is. The Master and Secundra try to escape giving the impression that they have lost their way, but they are forced to join the group again. (p.217)

Then they abandon the boats and go on foot. Now one group is striving to stay alive and the other group is striving to get the treasure. The thugs keep a close track of the Master hoping he will give a clue as to the location of the treasure. The Master has to keep humouring them. He keeps up a good act, laughing and being polite. The thugs are getting impatient. Then the Master pretends to be ill and goes to sleep under a buffalo robe outside the tent. (p.218)

He escapes. He is later pursued by some of the others. Mountain sights him and gets close to him and finds him sitting with his back to a stone. When he looks in Mountain's direction he disempowers him and Mountain retreats. The Master re-joins his pursuers. He tells them he has an explanation to give. He also tells them to put away their weapons and not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg i.e. himself. Meanwhile he quietly suggests to Mountain that he serve him rather than Harris:

"Dead or alive you will find me an ill man to quarrel with." (p.220)

They have a hasty meal. The Master tries to divide and conquer the treasure hunters. He turns the others against Harris by telling them that he has outsmarted them because he has already been paid by Mr Henry to destroy the Master. The Master actually offers to kill

Harris. Then Hastie challenges the Master. He says that Harris's behaviour is irrelevant. What matters is that they get the treasure. He also says that they will not permit the Master to kill Harris because they have already had enough trouble disarming him and do not wish to give him another weapon. The Master then attempts to play for time by telling them that the treasure is only a short walk away from their present location and they will get to it tomorrow. Through all of this the Master really keeps his cool.

During the night the Master claims to be very sick and calls Hastie to attend on him. He declares the Master to be on the point of death – but he still wants him to take them to the treasure. Eventually the Master's illness is so severe that they all agree that it would be wrong to make him lead them to the treasure. On the third day of his illness the Master reveals to them where the treasure is concealed and tells them to go and look for it. This will mean them splitting up but they do not trust one another, so no one goes to look for the treasure. Then the Master dies. He is buried with his face uncovered and his nostrils blocked.

In the camp that night Pinkerton is scalped. On the next night the same happens to Hicks. They think a Red Indian has done this. Gradually they are all picked off until only Mountain and Secundra Dass are left alive. The day before Mountain meets up with Mackellar and Henry's party, after he is sure that they are no longer being followed by an Indian assassin, Secundra leaves Mountain and retrieves his footsteps into the frozen wastes:

"Secundra had thereupon turned directly about and returned without a word upon their footprints, setting his face for these wintry and hungry solitudes, along a path whose every stage was mile-stoned with a mutilated corpse." (p.227)

CHAPTER 12

The Journey in the Wilderness (continued)

William Johnson was the diplomat who kept the peace between the Indian and the white man (and is compared to Duncan Forbes of Culloden). The slaughter of the treasure hunters convinces him that hostilities have started and it might be too late to stop them. He asks Henry and Mackellar to return to Albany. At this point Henry looks really strange and crazed. (p.229) Henry refuses to return. Johnson believes there is no reason for him to proceed since his brother is now dead but Henry wants to know what James died of. He does not believe he is dead and he says that the present circumstances have a bearing on his son's succession to the title of Lord Durrisddeer:

“This is a matter of succession; my son’s title may be called in doubt; and the man being supposed to be dead of nobody can tell what, a great deal of suspicion would be naturally roused.” (p.230)

Henry asks Mountain if James looked dead. He says he did. Henry then states that James and Secundra Dass were “never canny” (ie supernatural in some way). He says that Secundra was James’s familiar spirit. He alleges that he had killed James before and that Mackellar and his father had buried him before (which they had not), so why should he be dead now? Above all he wants to know why Secundra has retraced his steps if James is really dead.

Johnson speaks privately to Mackellar. Mackellar agrees that Henry is mad – but he does not know if he is mad enough to need restraining. Johnson does not wish to become involved with the family’s problems but he would like them to return to Albany. Mackellar says they want to find out why Secundra has gone back to where James died. Johnson is determined to save Secundra’s life. He asks if Henry will return to Albany if he (Johnson) undertakes to see the grave and rescue Secundra. (p.233) Mackellar says that, if Henry goes back without getting to the bottom of why Secundra has returned to the forest, he may lose his mind and, indeed, his life. Johnson agrees to let them come with him – but he takes no responsibility for them.

They set out directly for the grave through freezing conditions. (p.234) Mackellar and Henry look out in the direction of the grave. Mackellar thinks how lucky James is to be free of the cares of the world. He reflects that the good Henry of the past is, in a sense, also dead. (p.235) Then they hear a sound. (p.236) Mountain thinks it is Secundra digging up the treasure. Johnson decides to ambush Secundra. As they get closer they hear the ringing of the iron implement used for digging. They see Harris’s old encampment and in it Secundra is digging up the grave of James. (p.237)

Johnson accosts Secundra and accuses him of sacrilege. (p.238) He takes off to the woods. Then he returns and asks them to help him. He then sees Henry and screams in fright. He accuses Mountain of murder and Henry and Mackellar of being “hire-murderers”. He then sets about saving James whom he says is buried, not dead. (p.239)

Secundra asks for help. Johnson has a fire lit. Secundra digs James up. He has a beard (He was buried clean-shaven a week before!) They lift him out of the grave. Secundra applies resuscitation. James’s eyes open for a moment. When Henry observes this he drops dead with the shock. Secundra keeps working on James but he does not revive James again. It is too cold. Later Secundra

takes part in the funeral of the two men. After the funeral Mackellar has two inscriptions carved into a boulder near the communal grave of the brothers:

J. D.,
HEIR TO A SCOTTISH TITLE,
A MASTER OF THE ARTS AND GRACES,
ADMIRER IN EUROPE, ASIA, AMERICA,
IN WAR AND PEACE,
IN THE TENTS OF SAVAGE HUNTERS AND
THE CITADELS OF KINGS, AFTER SO
MUCH ACQUIRED, ACCOMPLISHED, AND
ENDURED, LIES HERE FORGOTTEN.

H. D.,
HIS BROTHER,
AFTER A LIFE OF UNMERITED DISTRESS,
BRAVELY SUPPORTED,
DIED ALMOST IN THE SAME HOUR,
AND SLEEPS IN THE SAME GRAVE
WITH HIS FRATERNAL ENEMY.

THE PIETY OF HIS WIFE AND ONE OLD
SERVANT RAISED THIS STONE
TO BOTH.