

CAMPBELL  
of KILMOHR

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

by J. A. Ferguson

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

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## INTRODUCTION

*Campbell of Kilmobr* was first performed in an amateur production by the Auchinblae Dramatic Club in September 1913, but came to wider notice on its first professional production by the Scottish Repertory Theatre in Glasgow's Royalty Theatre on 23 March 1914. The play was an immediate success and would later be hailed by the *Scottish Playgoer* magazine as 'having laid the first stone of the Scottish National Theatre'. It was published in book form in 1915 and went on to become one of Scotland's most frequently performed plays in the twentieth century.

John Alexander Ferguson (1871–1952) was perhaps a rather unlikely playwright. He was born in Callander in Stirlingshire, and worked in his home town as a railway clerk before being ordained in 1898 as a Deacon in the Scottish Episcopal Church. Having pursued his ministry in Dundee, Guernsey, Durham, and Glasgow, Ferguson was rector of St Palladius in Drumtochty when he wrote and produced *Campbell of Kilmobr* for the Auchinblae Players. He followed the play with three others: *The Scarecrow* (1922) and *The King of Morven* (1922) which were staged by the Scottish National Players in 1923 and 1926; and the later *Such Stuff as Dreams* (1942).

If the first stage of Ferguson's writing career was unconventional, its second was even less predictable. Having created the memorable villain of Archibald Campbell of Kilmohr, he turned his hand (under the name John Ferguson) to writing about more modern forms of villainy in prose, beginning with *Stealthy Terror* (1917), a spy story in the vein of John Buchan's *Thirty-Nine Steps*. He followed this with nine other thrillers and a historical novel, *Dalgarney goes North* (1938), set, like *Campbell of Kilmohr*, around the events of 1745–46. With these books – five of them featuring London-based Scottish crime reporter Francis McNab – Ferguson secured a reputation between the wars as an accomplished writer of ingeniously plotted and well-written novels. His final thriller was *Terror on the Island* (1942), a return to spy fiction set during the German occupation of the Channel Islands.

Written on the eve of the First World War, *Campbell of Kilmohr* revolves around themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and betrayal, the power of the State and the potential for the corruption of that power. These are ideas that exercised Ferguson throughout his writing career, and which continue to hold a powerful resonance for our own times.

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## CAST LIST

MARY STEWART, an old woman

MORAG CAMERON, a young woman

DUGALD STEWART, Mary Stewart's son, a young man

CAPTAIN SANDEMAN, a British Army officer

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR, a gentleman

JAMES MACKENZIE, a clerk

Four British SOLDIERS in uniform, with muskets



# CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

*a play in one act*

by J. A. Ferguson

**SETTING:** Interior of a lonely cottage on the road from Struan to Rannoch in North Perthshire.

**TIME:** 1746, just after the collapse of the '45 Rebellion.

[MORAG CAMERON *is restlessly moving backwards and forwards.* MARY STEWART *is seated on a low stool beside the peat fire in the centre of the floor.*]

[*The room is scantily furnished and the women are poorly clad. MORAG is barefooted. At the back is the door that leads to the outside. On the left of the door is a small window. On the right side of the room there is a door that opens into a barn. MORAG stands for a moment at the window, looking out.*]

MORAG: It is the wild night outside.

MARY: Is the snow still coming down?

MORAG: It is that then—dancing and swirling with the wind too, and never stopping at all. Aye, and so black I cannot see the other side of the road.

MARY: That is good.

[MORAG *moves across the floor and stops irresolutely. She is restless, expectant.*]

MORAG: Will I be putting the light in the window?

MARY: Why should you be doing that! You have not heard his call, (*turns eagerly*) have you?

MORAG (*with sign of head*): No, but the light in the window would show him all is well.

MARY: It would not, then! The light was to be put there *after* we had heard the signal.

MORAG: But on a night like this he may have been calling for long and we never hear him.

MARY: Do not be so anxious, Morag. Keep to what he says. Put more peat on the fire now and sit down.

MORAG (*with increasing excitement*): I canna, I canna! There is that in me that tells me something is going to befall us this night. Oh, that wind, hear to it, sobbing round the house as if it brought some poor lost soul up to the door, and we refusing it shelter.

MARY: Do not be fretting yourself like that. Do as I bid you. Put more peats to the fire.

MORAG (*at the wicker peat-basket*): Never since I . . . What was that? (*Both listening for a moment.*)

MARY: It was just the wind; it is rising more. A sore night for them that are out in the heather.

(MORAG *puts peat on the fire without speaking.*)

MARY: Did you notice were there many people going by to-day?

MORAG: No. After daybreak the redcoats came by from Struan: and there was no more till nine, when an old man like the Catechist from Killichonan passed. At four o'clock, just

when the dark was falling, a horseman with a lad holding to the stirrup, and running fast, went by towards Rannoch.

MARY: But no more redcoats?

MORAG (*shaking her head*): The road has been as quiet as the hills, and they as quiet as the grave. Do you think he will come?

MARY: Is it you think I have the gift, girl, that you ask me that? All I know is that it is five days since he was here for meat and drink for himself and for the others—five days and five nights, mind you; and little enough he took away; and those in hiding no' used to such sore lying, I'll be thinking. He must try to get through tonight. But that quietness, with no one to be seen from daylight till dark, I do not like it, Morag. They must know something. They must be watching.

*(A sound is heard by both women. They stand listening.)*

MARY: Haste you with the light, Morag.

MORAG: But it came from the back of the house—from the hillside.

MARY: Do as I tell you. The other side may be watched.

*(A candle is lit and placed in the window. MORAG goes hurrying to the door.)*

MARY: Stop, stop! Would you be opening the door with a light like that shining from the house? A man would be seen against it in the doorway for a mile. And who knows what eyes may be watching? Put out the light now and cover the fire.

*(Room is reduced to semi-darkness, and the door unbarred. Someone enters.)*

MORAG: You are cold, Dugald!

(DUGALD STEWART, *very exhausted, signs assent.*)

MORAG: And wet, oh, wet through and through!

DUGALD: Erricht Brig was guarded, well guarded. I had to win  
across the water.

(MARY *has now relit candle and taken away plaid from fire.*)

MARY: Erricht Brig—then—

DUGALD (*nods*): Yes—in a corrie, on the far side of Dearig,  
half-way up.

MARY: Himself is there then?

DUGALD: Aye, and Keppoch as well, and another and a greater  
is with them.

MARY: Wheest! (*Glances at MORAG.*)

DUGALD: Mother, is it that you can . . .

MARY: Yes, yes, Morag will bring out the food for ye to carry  
back. It is under the hay in the barn, well hid. Morag will  
bring it. Go, Morag, and bring it.

(MORAG *enters other room or barn which opens on right.*)

DUGALD: Mother, I wonder at ye; Morag would never tell—  
never.

MARY: Morag is only a lass yet. She has never been tried. And  
who knows what she might be made to tell.

DUGALD: Well, well, it is no matter, for I was telling you where  
I left them, but not where I am to *find* them.

MARY: They are not where you said now?

DUGALD: No; they left the corrie last night, and I am to find  
them (*whispers*) in a quiet part on Rannoch Moor.

MARY: It is as well for a young lass not to be knowing. Do not tell her.

DUGALD: Well, well, I will not tell her. Then she cannot tell where they are even if she wanted to.

*(He sits down at table; MARY ministers to his wants.)*

DUGALD: A fire is a merry thing on a night like this; and a roof over the head is a great comfort.

MARY: Ye'll no' can stop the night?

DUGALD: No. I must be many a mile from here before the day breaks on Ben Dearig.

*(MORAG re-enters.)*

MORAG: It was hard to get through, Dugald?

DUGALD: You may say that. I came down Erricht for three miles, and then when I reached low country I had to take to walking in the burns because of the snow that shows a man's steps and tells who he is to them that can read; and there's plenty can do that abroad, God knows.

MORAG: But none spied ye?

DUGALD: Who can tell? Before dark came, from far up on the slopes of Dearig I saw soldiers down below; and away towards the Rannoch Moor they were scattered all over the country like black flies on a white sheet. A wild cat or anything that couldna fly could never have got through. And men at every brig and ford and pass! I had to strike away up across the slopes again; and even so as I turned round the bend beyond Kilrain I ran straight into a sentry sheltering behind a great rock. But after that it was easy going.

MORAG: How could that be?

DUGALD: Well, you see, I took the boots off him, and then I had no need to mind who might see my steps in the snow.

MORAG: You took the boots off him!

DUGALD (*laughing*): I did that same. Does that puzzle your bonny head? How does a lad take the boots off a redcoat? Find out the answer, my lass, while I will be finishing my meat.

MORAG: Maybe he was asleep?

DUGALD: Asleep! Asleep! Well, well, he sleeps sound enough now, with the ten toes of him pointed to the sky.

(MARY *has taken up Dugald's dirk from the table. She puts it down again. MORAG sees the action and pushes the dirk away so that it rolls off the table and drops to the floor. She hides her face in her hands.*)

MARY: Morag, bring in the kebbuck o' cheese.

Now that all is well and safe it is we that will look after his comfort to-night. (MORAG *goes into barn.*) I mind well her mother saying to me—it was one day in the black winter that she died, when the frost took the land in its grip and the birds fell stiff from the trees, and the deer came down and put their noses to the door—I mind well her saying just before she died—

(*Loud knocking at the door.*)

A VOICE: In the King's name!

(*Both rise, startled.*)

MARY (*recovering first*): The hay in the barn—quick, my son.

(*Knocking continues.*)

A VOICE: Open in the King's name!

(DUGALD *snatches up such articles as would reveal his presence and hurries into barn. He overlooks the dirk on floor. MARY goes towards the door, slowly, to gain time.*)

MARY: Who is there? What do you want?

A VOICE: Open, open.

(MARY *opens the door and CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR follows CAPTAIN SANDEMAN into the house. Behind CAMPBELL comes a man carrying a leather wallet: JAMES MACKENZIE, his clerk. The rear is brought up by four SOLDIERS carrying arms.*)

SANDEMAN: Ha, the bird has flown.

CAMPBELL (*who has struck the dirk with his foot and picked it up*): But the nest is warm; look at this.

SANDEMAN: It seems as if we had disturbed him at supper.  
Search the house, men.

MARY: I'm just a lonely old woman. You have been misguided. I was getting through my supper.

CAMPBELL (*holding up dirk*): And this was your toothpick, eh?  
Na! Na! We ken whaur we are, and wha we want, and by Cruachan, I think we've got him.

(*Sounds are heard from the barn, and soldiers return with MORAG. She has stayed in hiding from fear, and she still holds the cheese in her hands.*)

SANDEMAN: What have we here?

CAMPBELL: A lass!

MARY: It's just my dead brother's daughter. She was getting me the cheese, as you can see.



CAMPBELL: On, men, again: the other turtle-doo will no' be far away. (*Bantering to MARY*) Tut, tut, Mistress Stewart, and do ye have her wait upon ye while your leddyship dines alane! A grand way to treat your dead brother's daughter; fie, fie, upon ye!

(*Soldiers reappear with DUGALD, whose arms are pinioned.*)

CAMPBELL: Did I no' tell ye! And this, Mrs. Stewart, will be your dead sister's son, I'm thinking; or aiblins your leddyship's butler! Weel, woman, I'll tell ye this: Pharaoh spared ae butler, but Erchie Campbell will no' spare anither. Na! na! Pharaoh's case is no' to be taken as forming ony precedent. And so if he doesna answer certain questions we have to speir at him, before morning he'll hang as high as Haman.

(*DUGALD is placed before the table at which CAMPBELL has seated himself. Two SOLDIERS guard DUGALD. Another is behind CAMPBELL's chair and another is by the door. The clerk, MACKENZIE, is seated at up corner of table. SANDEMAN stands by the fire.*)

CAMPBELL (to DUGALD): Weel, sir, it is within the cognizance of the law that you have knowledge and information of the place of harbour and concealment used by certain persons who are in a state of proscription. Furthermore, it is known that four days ago certain other proscribed persons did join with these, and that they are banded together in an endeavour to secure the escape from these dominions of His Majesty, King George, of certain persons who by their crimes and treasons lie open to the capital charge. What say ye?

(*DUGALD makes no reply.*)

CAMPBELL: Ye admit this then?

(DUGALD *silent as before.*)

CAMPBELL: Come, come, my lad. Ye stand in great jeopardy. Great affairs of state lie behind this which are beyond your simple understanding. Speak up and it will be the better for ye.

(DUGALD *silent as before.*)

CAMPBELL: Look you. I'll be frank with you. No harm will befall you this night (and I wish all in this house to note my words)—no harm will befall you this night if you supply the information required.

(DUGALD *silent as before.*)

CAMPBELL (*with sudden passion*): Sandeman, put your sword to the carcass o' this muckle ass and see will it louse his tongue.

(SANDEMAN *does not move.*)

DUGALD: It may be as well then, Mr. Campbell, that I should say a word to save your breath. It is this: Till you talk Rannoch Loch to the top of Schiehallion, ye'll no' talk me into a yea or nay.

CAMPBELL (*quietly*): Say ye so? Noo, I widna be so very sure if I were you. I've had a lairge experience o' life, and speaking out of it I would say that only fools and the dead never change their minds.

DUGALD (*quietly too*): Then you'll be adding to your experience to-night, Mr. Campbell, and you'll have something to put on the other side of it.

CAMPBELL (*tapping his snuff-box*): Very possibly, young sir, but what I would present for your consideration is this: While ye may be prepared to keep your mouth shut under

the condition of a fool, are ye equally prepared to do so  
in the condition of a dead man?

(CAMPBELL *waits expectantly*. DUGALD *silent as before*.)

CAMPBELL: Tut, tut, now if it's afraid ye are, my lad, with my  
hand on my heart and on my word as a gentleman . . .

DUGALD: Afraid!

(*He spits in contempt towards CAMPBELL*.)

CAMPBELL (*enraged*): Ye damned stubborn Hieland stot . . .  
(*To SANDEMAN*) Have him taken out. We'll get it  
another way.

(CAMPBELL *rises*. DUGALD *is moved into the barn by the*  
SOLDIERS, *who remain with him*.)

CAMPBELL (*walking*): Some puling eediots, Sandeman, would  
applaud this contumacy and call it constancy. Constancy!  
Now, I've had a lairge experience o' life, and I never saw yet  
a sensible man insensible to the touch of yellow metal. If  
there may be such a man, it is demonstrable that he is no  
sensible man. Fideelity! quotha, it's sheer obstinacy. They  
just see that ye want something oot o' them, and they're so  
damned selfish and thrawn they winna pairt. And with the  
natural inabeelity o' their brains to hold mair than one idea  
at a time they canna see that in return you could put  
something into their palms far more profitable. (*Sits again*  
*at table*.) Aweel, bring Mistress Stewart up.

(MARY *is placed before him where DUGALD had been*.)

CAMPBELL (*more ingratiatingly*): Weel noo, Mistress Stewart,  
good woman, this is a sair predeecament for ye to be in. I  
would jist counsel ye to be candid. Doubtless yer mind is a'  
in a swirl. Ye kenna what way to turn. Maybe ye are like the

Psalmist and say: "I lookit this way and that, and there was no man to peety me, or to have compassion upon my fatherless children." But, see now, ye would be wrong; and, if ye tell me a' ye ken, I'll stand freends wi' ye. Put your trust in Erchie Campbell.

MARY: I trust no Campbell.

CAMPBELL: Weel, weel noo, I'm no' jist that set up wi' them myself. There's but ae Campbell that I care muckle about, after a'. But, good wife, it's no' the Campbells we're trying the noo; so, as time presses we'll jist *birze yont*, as they say themselves. Noo then, speak up.

(MARY *is silent.*)

CAMPBELL (*beginning grimly and, passing through astonishment, expostulation, and a feigned contempt for mother and pity for son, to a pretence of sadness which, except at the end, makes his words come haltingly*): Ah! ye also. I suppose ye understand, woman, how it will go wi' your son? (*To MACKENZIE*) Here's a fine mother for ye, James! Would you believe it? She kens what would save her son—the very babe she nursed at her breast; but will she save him? Na! na! Sir, he may look after himself! A mother, a mother! Ha! ha!

(CAMPBELL *laughs*. MACKENZIE *titters foolishly*.)

CAMPBELL *pauses to watch effect of his words.*)

Aye, you would think, James, that she would remember the time when he was but little and afraid of all the terrors that walk in darkness, and how he looked up to her as to a tower of safety, and would run to her with outstretched hands, hiding his face from his fear, in her gown. The darkness! It is the dark night and a long journey before him now.

(*He pauses again.*)

You would think, James, that she would mind how she happit him from the cold of winter and sheltered him from the summer heats, and, when he began to find his footing, how she had an eye on a' the beasts of the field and on the water and the fire that were become her enemies. And to what purpose all this care?—tell me that, my man, to what good, if she is to leave him at the last to dangle from a tree at the end of a hempen rope—to see his flesh to be meat for the fowls of the air—her son, her little son!

MARY (*softly*): My son—my little son! . . . Oh, (*more loudly*) but my son he has done no crime.

CAMPBELL: Has he no'! Weel, mistress, as ye'll no' take my word for it, maybe ye'll list to Mr. Mackenzie here. What say ye, James?

MACKENZIE: He is guilty of aiding and abetting in the concealment of proscribed persons; likewise with being found in the possession of arms, contrary to statute, both very heinous crimes.

CAMPBELL: Very well said, James! Forby, between ourselves, Mrs. Stewart, the young man in my opeenion is guilty of another crime (*snuffs*)—he is guilty of the heinous crime of not knowing on which side his bread is buttered. Come now . . .

MARY: Ye durst not lay a finger on the lad, ye durst not hang him.

MACKENZIE: And why should the gentleman not hang him if it plesure him?

(CAMPBELL *taps snuff-box and takes pinch.*)

MARY (*with intensity*): Campbell of Kilmohr, lay but one finger on Dugald Stewart and the weight of Ben Cruachan will

be light to the weight that will be laid on your soul. I will lay the curse of the seven rings upon your life: I will call up the fires of Ephron, the blue and the green and the grey fires, for the destruction of your soul: I will curse you in your homestead and in the wife it shelters, and in the children that will never bear your name. Yea, and ye shall be cursed.

CAMPBELL (*startled, betrays agitation—the snuff is spilled from his trembling hand*): Hoot toot, woman! ye're, ye're . . . (*Angrily*) Ye auld beldame, to say such things to me! I'll have ye first whippit and syne droont for a witch. Damn thae stubborn and supersteetious cattle! (*To SANDEMAN*) We should have come in here before him and listened in the barn, Sandeman!

SANDEMAN (*in quick staccato, always cool*): Ah, listen behind the door you mean! Now I never thought of that!

CAMPBELL: Did ye not! Humph! Well, no doubt there are a good many things in the universe that yet wait for your thought upon them. What would be your objections, now?

SANDEMAN: There are two objections, Kilmohr, that you would understand.

CAMPBELL: Name them.

SANDEMAN: Well, in the first place, we have not wings like crows to fly . . . and the footsteps on the snow . . . Second point: the woman would have told him we were there.

CAMPBELL: Not if I told her I had power to clap her in Inverness jail.

MARY (*in contempt*): Yes, even if ye had told me ye had power to clap me in hell, Mr. Campbell.

CAMPBELL: Lift me that screeching Jezebel oot o' here; Sandeman, we'll mak' a quick finish o' this. (SOLDIERS *take her towards barn*) No, not there, pitch the old girzie into the snow.

MARY (*as she is led outside*): Ye'll never find him, Campbell, never, never!

CAMPBELL (*enraged*): Find him, Aye, by God I'll find him, if I have to keek under every stone on the mountains from the Boar of Badenoch to the Sow of Athole. (MARY *and* SOLDIERS *go outside, leaving only* CAMPBELL, MACKENZIE, SANDEMAN, *and* MORAG *in the room; MORAG huddled up on stool.*) And now, Captain Sandeman, you an' me must have a word or two. I noted your objection to listening ahint doors and so on. Now, I make a' necessary allowances for youth and the grand and magneeficent ideas commonly held, for a little while, in that period. I had them myself. But, man, gin ye had trod the floor of the Parliament Hoose in Edinburry as long as I did, wi' a pair o' thin hands at the bottom o' toom pockets, ye'd ha'e shed your fine notions, as I did. Noo, fine pernickety noansense will no' do in this business—

SANDEMAN: Sir!

CAMPBELL: Softly, softly, Captain Sandeman, and hear till what I have to say. I have noticed with regret several things in your remarks and bearing which are displeasing to me. I would say just one word in your ear; it is this: These things, Sandeman, are not conducive to advancement in His Majesty's service.

SANDEMAN (*after a brief pause in which the two eye each other*): Kilmohr, I am a soldier, and if I speak out my mind you must pardon me if my words are blunt. I do not like this work, but I *loathe* your methods.

CAMPBELL: Mislike the methods you may, but the work ye must do! Methods are my business. Let me tell you the true position. In ae word it is no more and no less than this. You and me are baith here to carry out the proveesions of the Act for the Pacification of the Highlands. That means the cleaning up of a very big mess, Sandeman, a very big mess. Now, what is your special office in this work? I'll tell ye, man; you and your men are just beesoms in the hands of the law-officers of the Crown. In this district, I order and ye soop! (*He indicates door of barn*) Now soop, Captain Sandeman.

SANDEMAN: What are you after? I would give something to see into your mind.

CAMPBELL: Ne'er fash about my mind: what has a soldier to do with ony mental operations? It's His Grace's orders that concerns you. Oot wi' your man and set him up against the wa'.

SANDEMAN: Kilmohr, it is murder—murder, Kilmohr!

CAMPBELL: Hoots awa', man. It's a thing o' nae special signeeificance.

SANDEMAN: I must ask you for a warrant.

CAMPBELL: Quick then: Mackenzie will bring it out to you.

(*MACKENZIE begins writing as Sandeman goes and orders the soldiers to lead DUGALD outside. CAMPBELL sits very still and thoughtful. MACKENZIE finishes writing and places warrant before CAMPBELL for his signature.*)

MACKENZIE: At this place, sir.

CAMPBELL (*again alert*): Hoots, I was forgetting.

MACKENZIE: It is a great power ye have in your hands, Kilmohr, to be able to send a man to death on the nod, as ye might say.



CAMPBELL (*sitting back, pen in hand*): Power! power, say ye?  
Man, do ye no see I've been beaten. Do ye no see that?  
Archibald Campbell and a' his men and his money are less  
to them than the wind blowing in their faces.

MACKENZIE: Well, it's a strange thing that.

CAMPBELL (*throwing down the pen and rising*): Aye, it's a  
strange thing that. It's a thing fit to sicken a man against  
the notion that there are probabilities on this earth . . . Ye  
see, James, beforehand I would have said nothing could be  
easier.

MACKENZIE: Than to get them to tell?

CAMPBELL: Aye, just that. But you heard what he said: 'You'll  
be adding to your experience this night, Mr. Campbell,  
and you'll have something to put to the other side of it,  
says he. (*Paces away, hands behind back.*) Aye, and I have  
added something to it, a thing I like but little. (*Turning  
to face MACKENZIE with raised hand.*) Do you see what  
it is, James? A dream can be stronger than a strong man  
armed. Just a whispered word, a pointed finger even,  
would ha'e tell'd us a'. But no! No! And so I am powerless  
before the visions and dreams of an old woman and a  
half-grown lad.

MACKENZIE (*who now stands waiting for the warrant*): No'  
exactly powerless, Kilmohr, for if ye canna open his mouth  
ye can shut it; and there's some satisfaction in that.

CAMPBELL (*sitting down to sign warrant*): No' to me, man,  
no' to me. (*He hands the paper to MACKENZIE who goes  
out.*) For I've been beaten. Aye, the pair o' them have beat  
me, though it's only a matter o' seconds till one of them  
be dead.

MORAG (*her voice coming quickly, in a sharp whisper, like an echo of CAMPBELL's last word as she sits up to stare at him*):  
Dead!

CAMPBELL (*startled*): What is that?

MORAG (*slowly*): Is he dead?

CAMPBELL (*aloud*): Oh, it's you. I'd forgotten you were there.

MORAG (*in the same tone*): Is he dead?

CAMPBELL (*grimly*): Not yet, but if ye'll look through this window (*he indicates window*) preesently, ye'll see him gotten ready for death.

(*He picks up hat, gloves, cloak, and is about to go out.*)

MORAG (*after a pause, very slowly and brokenly*): I—will—tell—  
you.

CAMPBELL (*astounded*): What!

MORAG: I will tell you all you are seeking to know.

CAMPBELL (*in a whisper, thunderstruck*): Good God, and to think, to think I was on the very act . . . on the very act of . . . (*recovering*) Tell me—tell me at once.

MORAG: You will promise that he will not be hanged?

CAMPBELL: He will not. I swear it.

MORAG: You will give him back to me?

CAMPBELL: I will give him back—unhung.

MORAG: Then (*CAMPBELL comes near*), in a corrie half-way up the far side of Dearig—God save me!

CAMPBELL (*in exultation*): Dished after a'. I've clean dished them! Loard, Loard! (*With intense solemnity, clasping hands*)

*and looking upwards.*) Once more I can believe in the rationality of Thy world. (*Gathers up again his cloak, hat, etc.*) And to think . . . to think . . . I was on the very act of going away like a beaten dog!

MORAG: He is safe from hanging now?

CAMPBELL (*chuckles and looks out at window before replying, and is at door when he speaks*): Very near it, very near it. Listen!

*(He holds up his hand—a volley of musketry is heard.*

CAMPBELL *goes out, leaving door wide open. After a short interval of silence MARY enters and advances a few steps towards the girl, who has sunk on her knees at the volley.*)

MARY: Did you hear, Morag Cameron, did you hear?

*(MORAG is sobbing, her face covered by her hands.)*

MARY: Och! be quiet now; I would be listening till the last sound of it passes into the great hills and over all the wide world . . . It is fitting for you to be crying, a child that cannot understand; but water shall never wet eye of mine for Dugald Stewart. Last night I was but the mother of a lad that herded sheep on the Athole hills: this morn it is I that am the mother of a man who is among the great ones of the earth. All over the land they will be telling of Dugald Stewart. Mothers will teach their children to be men by him. High will his name be with the teller of fine tales . . . The great men came, they came in their pride, terrible like the storm they were, and cunning with words of guile were they. Death was with them . . . He was but a lad, a young lad, with great length of days before him, and the grandeur of the world. But he put it all from him. "Speak," said they, "speak, and life and great riches will be for yourself." But he said no word at all! Loud was the swelling of their wrath!

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

Let the heart of you rejoice, Morag Cameron, for the snow  
is red with his blood. There are things greater than death.  
Let them that are children shed the tears. . .

*(She comes forward and lays her hand on the girl's shoulder.)*

MARY: Let us go and lift him into the house, and not be leaving  
him lie out there alone.

CURTAIN

## GLOSSARY

<b>aiblins:</b>	perhaps
<b>besom:</b>	broom
<b>birze yont:</b>	press on
<b>forby:</b>	besides
<b>(the) gift:</b>	second sight
<b>girzie:</b>	old hag
<b>kebbuck:</b>	whole cheese
<b>keek:</b>	peep
<b>louse:</b>	loosen
<b>muckle:</b>	much
<b>puling:</b>	whining
<b>quotha:</b>	said he
<b>soop:</b>	sweep
<b>speir at:</b>	ask
<b>stot:</b>	stupid clumsy fellow
<b>syne:</b>	next
<b>thrawn:</b>	stubborn
<b>toom:</b>	empty

## QUESTIONS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**Historical background:** a brief introduction to the Jacobite Rising of 1745, its defeat at the battle of Culloden in 1746, and the aftermath as government troops hunted down Charles Edward Stuart and those who had fought for his cause, is essential. Useful websites: Wikipedia, BBC History and others.

### I. Preliminary discussion

Class or group discussion around what students know about the Jacobites from films, television or previous learning. Try to group the responses into positive / negative / mixed.

### II. Questions on the text – for discussion and/or writing

- (a) Explain why Mary and Morag are anxious and tense at the start of the play.

(b) How is this shown by the way the characters speak and act?
- (a) How and why does the mood of the play change after Dugald arrives?

(b) How does this change again very suddenly and dramatically?
- (a) Why does Campbell make a reference to the bible story about Pharoah?

(b) What does it tell us about him that he compares himself to Pharoah?
- (a) When Campbell interrogates Dugald, what contrasts are brought out in their character through their speech, their bearing or actions?

(b) What different techniques does Campbell try during the interrogation?

QUESTIONS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

5. (a) What tactics does Campbell try during his interrogation of Mary?  
(b) What does this reveal about his character?  
(c) What effect does Mary's curse have on Campbell and how is this shown?
6. (a) What does Captain Sandeman mean when he says 'I loathe your methods'?  
(b) Why does he say this and what is Campbell's answer?  
(c) What contrast in their characters is shown here? Who do you think the author wants us to sympathise with and why?
7. (a) Explain what makes the climax of the play very dramatic.  
(b) Explain how the climax contains a number of unexpected twists in the plot.  
(c) How is there also an ironic twist to the ending?
8. (a) How do you think Campbell feels as he exits and what aspects of his character are emphasised by his behaviour and attitude?  
(b) In your opinion, how far has he succeeded and how far has he failed?
9. (a) In your opinion, do any of these words apply to Dugald: brave, loyal, stubborn, foolish, stupid, naïve? Why? What other words would you use?  
(b) In your opinion do any of these words apply to Morag: brave, foolish, stupid, disloyal, innocent, naïve? Why? What other words would you use?
10. It is often said that tragic drama reveals the greatness of the human spirit in the face of adversity.  
(a) What aspects of Mary Stewart's character are highlighted in both her defiance of Campbell and her final speech at the end (pp. 20–21)?

(b) Explain what she means by saying ‘high will his name be with the teller of fine tales’. How does this show us how she feels about her son’s death?

(c) Find another expression or sentence that shows a similar or different emotion (e.g. her last line) and explain how it shows this.

(d) Do you share Mary’s view of Dugald? How far do you think she or her son reveal ‘the greatness of the human spirit in the face of adversity’?

### III. Character

Your answers to the questions above should give you plenty of evidence about the main characters.

(a) Briefly explain what you like or dislike, admire or despise about each of the main characters.

(b) List several of the qualities or emotions shown by each character and give examples of how they are shown.

(c) Is any one shown to change for the better or worse or alter in some way during the drama? Who do you think is the most complex and who is the simplest or most straightforward character?

### IV. Language and style

1. In the opening scene, the women’s anxiety and tension is expressed via short sentences, questions, exclamations, commands, interrupted statements, repetition in word choice or sentence structure – e.g. Mary’s speech on p. 5: ‘five days . . . five days and five nights’, or ‘must try . . . must know . . . must be’). Pick any two examples and explain how language features are used to convey their emotions and create a suitable mood at the start.



2. Look at the description of the **weather and the landscape** on p. 3. Select any two examples of word choice and imagery and show what effect is created by each, e.g. the snow 'dancing and swirling' and 'so black' (opening lines), or the personification of the wind (p. 4) and similes of the 'road as quiet as the hills and they as quiet as the grave' (p. 5) or the image of 'the snow red with his blood' at the end (p. 21).
3. (a) What do expressions like 'carcass o this muckle ass' and 'damned stubborn Hielan stot' (bullock) reveal about Campbell's attitude?  
 (b) Can you find good examples of ambiguous language used to reveal his cunning or deceitfulness (pp. 13, 19) or ironic language used to reveal his hypocrisy? (e.g. pp. 12–14)
4. (a) How is language used during the interrogation to highlight the contrast between the character of Campbell and Dugald? Find two examples for each character. Note how little Dugald says, while Campbell has a great deal to say, and that Campbell's speech is very complex, full of elevated language (lots of big words) and long-winded, while Dugald's is very simple, short and blunt.  
 (b) Also notice the use of a formal legal or official register (e.g. pp. 10, 14) by Campbell and Mackenzie, which is quite difficult to understand. What do you think this reveals about them and their attitude?
5. Very powerful emotional language is used throughout the play, such as Campbell's anger, Dugald's defiance of Campbell, Mary's curse or final speech.  
 (a) Explain how **any two** of the following techniques are used effectively to convey strong emotions: hyperbole, comparison, contrast, repetition, word choice, imagery, punctuation, syntax, sentence structure, climactic structure, style, register.

(b) In any of the above, or any other lines, how do you think the author succeeds in making Mary and Morag's English actually sound like Gaelic speech?

## **V. Plot**

Outline the main stages in the development of the plot to show how it creates effective tension and suspense throughout, from the anxious opening, the arrival of the fugitive, the capture and interrogation, the dramatic climax and final twist to the solemn and tragic ending. Also try to sum up the plot in one sentence.

## **VI. Dramatic foreshadowing**

Effective use is made of premonitions and superstitions: see pp. 4–5, 14–15, 20–21. How do these lines turn out to be prophetic? Mary asks if Morag thinks she has 'the gift' (p. 5), and later her curse clearly unsettles Campbell. What dramatic effect is created by these elements?

## **VII. Setting**

(a) How important are the place and period the play is set in? (the Highlands of Scotland just after the defeat of the Jacobites in 1746)

(b) How important are the time of year (winter), the weather (a snowstorm) and the time of day (night) to the plot? Look at the descriptions of the weather and landscape – see

**IV. Language and style**, question 2.

## **VIII. Stagecraft**

1. What sort of set and props would be needed to create a realistic picture of a simple bare Highland cottage of this period?

2. What sort of lighting would be needed and why? What sort of mood would this help to create?
3. Working in a group, pick a scene from the play and make a list of the main moves, actions, props, lighting and sounds or anything else required in a stage production.

### **IX. Themes**

1. Discuss how the play examines the theme of loyalty or conflicting loyalties.
2. Select two other important themes that the play deals with and explain how the author develops these, e.g. justice or injustice, abuse of power, tyranny, sacrifice, victimisation, courage, martyrdom, betrayal. Can you think of any others?

### **X. Essay questions – select one**

1. Choose a character that you think develops in an interesting way (for better or worse) during the course of the play or one who shows admirable qualities in a difficult or dangerous situation. Explain how and why the character changes or how well he / she copes with the situation by the end.
2. Select a theme or themes you find interesting in the play and show how far the author succeeds in developing your awareness and interest in the theme.
3. Discuss how and why the setting (see **VII. Setting**) is very much at the heart of this drama.

**Other suitable texts / further reading:**

*The Flight of the Heron* by D. K. Broster (S3/4)

*Flemington* by Violet Jacob (AH)

*The New Road* by Neil Munro (H and AH) and many of Munro's short stories, especially 'Young Pennymore' (from *Jaunty Jock and Other Stories*) and 'War' (from *The Lost Pibroch and other Sheiling Stories*)

*Massacre at Glencoe* by David Starsmeare (S3/4)

*Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae* by Robert Louis Stevenson (H and AH)

*Nothing Left to Fear from Hell* by Alan Warner (AH)



J. A. Ferguson's one-act play *Campbell of Kilmohr*, set during the bloody aftermath of the battle of Culloden, was first performed in an amateur production by the Auchinblae Dramatic Club in September 1913, but came to wider notice on its first professional production in Glasgow's Royalty Theatre on 23 March 1914. The play was an immediate success and went on to become one of Scotland's most frequently performed plays in the twentieth century.

Written on the eve of the First World War, *Campbell of Kilmohr* revolves around themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and betrayal, the power of the State and the potential for the corruption of that power. These are ideas that exercised Ferguson throughout his writing career, and which continue to hold a powerful resonance for our own times.

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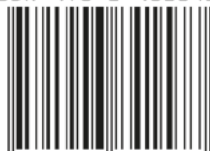
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Cover image: 'Disbanded' – oil on canvas, 1877  
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