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SYNOPSIS

The novel opens in 1751 when David Balfour, a youth of sixteen, has been left in poverty by the death of his parents. He decides to leave Essendean, the village in the Lowlands of Scotland where he has lived until now. On the advice of the clergyman of Essendean, he goes to his uncle, Ebenezer Balfour, who lives on a large estate near Edinburgh. David does not know that his uncle has got possession unlawfully of this estate from David's father. David is consequently the rightful heir.

Ebenezer first tries to kill David and then arranges for him to be kidnapped on board the ship, *The Covenant*, and to be sold as a slave in America.

While the ship is off the north west coast of Scotland it runs down and sinks a boat in a thick fog. There is only one man rescued from the boat; his name is Alan Breck, and he is a Jacobite who had taken part in the rising led by Bonnie prince Charlie. After their defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, Alan, together with the rest of the Jacobites, has become an outlaw in Scotland. Alan has been living in exile in France, but also returns periodically to Scotland to collect money for the Jacobite movement. He has just been on one of these secret visits.

The crew, led by Captain Hoseason, plots to murder Alan for his money. David overhears the plot, tells Alan, and together they defend themselves against the crew. *The Covenant* is wrecked and David is separated from Alan. After a period spent alone on an island, he gets to the mainland, and travels through the country, the Highlands, with the intention of joining Alan again.

On his way he witnesses the murder of Colin Campbell, and a pursuit starts after him, since he is suspected of being involved in the murder. Alan helps him to escape and now they are both hunted. After a dangerous journey through the Highlands, during which several times they almost fall into the hands of their pursuers, they manage to escape into the lowlands. The novel ends with David coming into his rightful estate.