

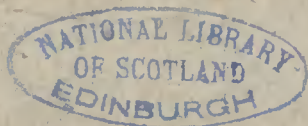
WITTY AND ENTERTAINING  
EXPLOITS  
OF  
WISE WILLIE,  
AND  
WITTY EPIE  
THE ALE-WIFE  
OF  
BUCKHAVEN.

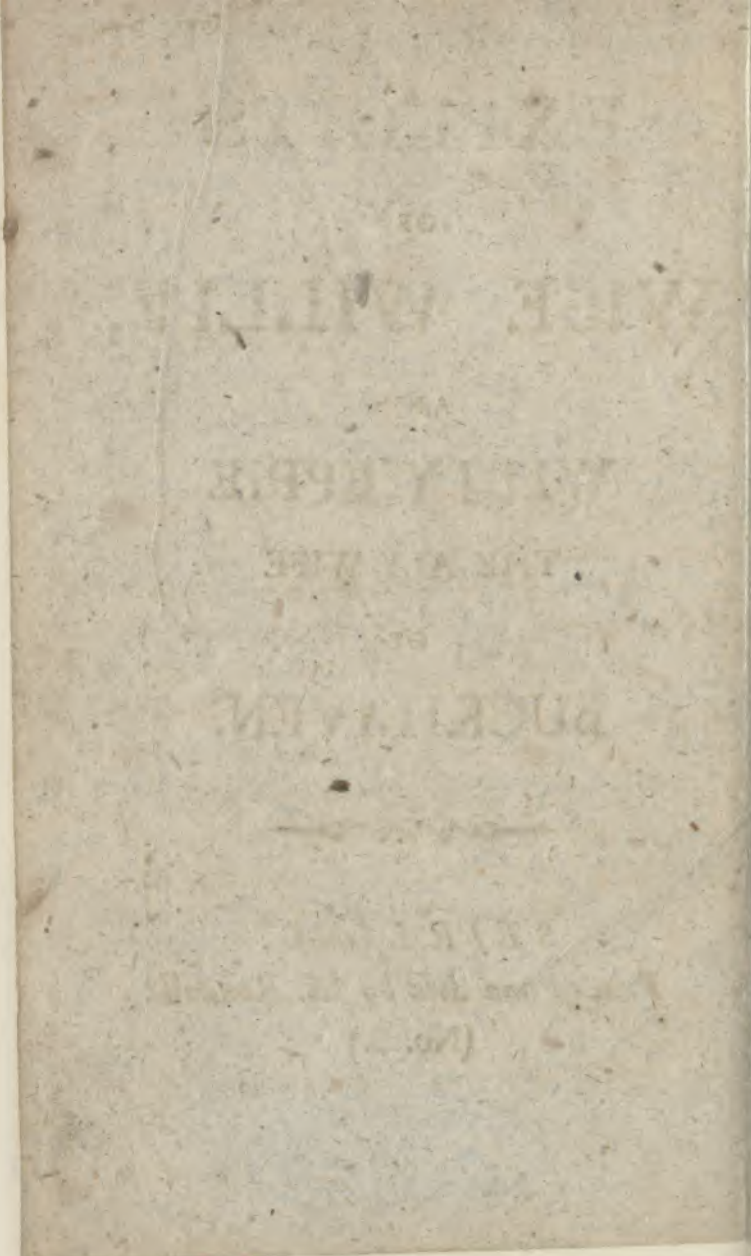


STIRLING:

*Printed and Sold by M. Randall.*

(No. 2.)





THE  
HISTORY

OF

WISE WILLY and WITTY EPPLE.

---

IN the county of Fife, on the sea-coast, there stands a little town, inhabited by few but fishers, called Bucky-harbour, because of sea-buckies and shells to be found so plenty on the rocks about that place. There is little mention made of this town by Historians, to know its original extraction and antiquities, but in their own Burges-Ticket, which was partly truth, but more of it by way of lampoon. This Ticket was dated the two and thirtieth day of the month of Julius Cesar. Their Coat of Arms was two hands gripping

each other over a Scate's rumpie. Their Oath was, "I wish that de deil may tak me, an I binna an houest man to you an ye binna de like to me." An article of good neighbourhood they had, whoever was first up in a good morning, was to raise all the rest to go to sea; but if a very bad morning, piss and go to bed again till break of day then raise Wise Willy, who could judge of the weather by the blowing of the wind.— Their freedoms were, to take all so ts of fish contained in their tickets. viz. Lobsters, partons, podlies, spout-fish, sea-cats, sea-dogs, flocks pikes, dick-pudocks, and p—fish.

Again, these people are said to have decended from one Tom and his two sons who were fishers on the coast of Norway, who in a voilent storm were blown over, and got ashore at Buck-harbour where they settled; & the whole of his children were called Thom-sons, and soon became a little

town by themselves, as few of any other name dwelt among them. This is a tradition. I story handed down from one generation to another.— They kept but little communication with country people about them, for a farmer in those days thought his daughter cast away if she married one of the fishers in Buckv-harbour; and, on the other hand, Witty Eppie the alewife was a sworn Be-go-laddie I wad rather see my boat and a' my three sons cadet against the Bass, or I saw ony ane o' them married to a muck-a-byre's daughter; a wheen useless tappies, it can do naething but rive at a tow rock, and cut corn; they can neither bait a hook nor rade a line, houk sand eels nor gather pirriwinkles.

Now, Wise Willie and Witty Eppie the ale wife lived there about a hundred years ago: Eppie's chamber was their College and Court-house where they decided controversies, &

explained their wonders; for the house was like a little kirk, had four windows and a gavel door, the wives got leave to flyte their fill, but fighting was prohibited, for Eppie said, up hands was fair play. Their fines were a pint o' ale, and Eppie said it at a plack the pint. They had neither minister nor magistrate, nor yet a burley-bailey, to brag them wi' his tolbooth. The Lord o' the manor decided all disputable points, and Wise Willie and Witty Eppie were the rulers of the town.

Now Eppie had a daughter, they ca'd Lingle-taild Nancy, because of her feckless growth; her waist was like a twitter, had nae curpen for a creel, being Edinburgh bred, and brought up wi' her Louden aunty, was learned to read and sew, made coarse claiths, and callicoe mancoes; there was nae a scholar in the town but hersel, she read the bible, and the book o' kirk sangs, that was newly.

7  
come in fashion. Willie and Eppie  
tell'd them ay what it meant, and said  
a' the letters in it was litted by my  
Lord for they saw him hae a feather  
that he dipped in black water, and  
made crooked scores, just like the  
same; and then he spoke o'er again,  
and it tell'd him what to say.

It happened on a day that two of  
their wives near the town, found a  
horse shoe, and brought it home and  
sent for Willie to see what it was,—  
Willie comes and looks at it; indeed  
co Willie, it's a thing and holes in't.  
I kent, co' they, he wad get a name  
till't. Aha, co' Willie, whar did ye  
get it? Aneath my Lord's ain house  
Willie. Adeed, said Willie, its the  
auld moon I ken by the holes in't for  
nailing it to the lift; but I winder it  
she fell in Fife, for the last time it I  
saw her, she was hingin on her back  
aboon Edinburgh. A hech co Willie  
we'll set her upon the highest  
house in the town, and we'll hae

moonlight o' our ain a' the days o' the year. The whole town ran to see the moon! Hout tout said Witty Eppie, ye're but a' fools taegither; it's but ane o' the things it my Lord's mare wears upon her lufe.

At another time one of the wives found a hare with its legs broken lying among her kail in the yard; She not knowing what it was, called out to her neighbours to see it. Some said it was a Gentleman's cat, or my Lady's lap-dog, or a sheep's young siltlen, because it had saft horns: Na, na, cried Wise Willie, it's ane o' the maukins o' gentlemens dogs worries. What will we do wi't? Staith, co' they all, we'll sing the weo aff, and make fish and sauce o't to my Tammie's parrich. Na, na, said Witty Eppie, better gie it to my Lord, and he'll stap an iron stick through the gut's o't, and gar't rin round afore the fire till it be roasted.



It happened on a dark winter morning that two of their wives were going to Dysart to sell their fish ; and on the roadside there happened to be some tinker's ass tethered. The poor ass seeing the two wives coming with their creels, thought it was the tinkers coming to flit or relieve him, fell a-crying : the two wives threw their fish away, and run home like mad persons, crying they had seen the deil say the very horned deil, and that he spoke to them, but they did na ken what he said, for it was waur than a Highlandman's ; the whole town was in an uproar ; some would go with picks and spades and hag him to pieces, ? others wad go and catch him in a strong net, and then they could either hang or drown him. Na, na, co Wise Willie, we mauna cast out wi' him at the first, as he's gotten the twa burdens o' fish, he'll e'en gang his wa' and no fash us ony mair ; he is o'er souple to be catch'd in a net ; a' your pith will neither hang him

nor drown him, and the kintry he comes frae, is a' het coals, he'd never burn: We'll gae till him in a civil manner and see what he wants. Get out Witty Eppie and lingle-tail'd Nancy wi' the Bible and Sang-Book, So aff they came in a crowd, either to kill the deil or catch him alive: and as they came near the place, the ass fell a crying, which caused many of them to faint and run back. Na, na, co' Willie, that's no the deil's words at a', its my Lord's trumpeter routing on his brass whistle. Willie ventured till he saw the asses twa lugs, Now said Willie, come forward an haud him fast, I see his twa horns, Heer, sirs, he has a white beard like an ald man. So they inclosed the poor ass on all sides, thinking it was the deil; but when Wise Willie saw he had nae cloven feet, he cried out, Scarna lads, this is nae the deil, it's some living beast; its neither caw nor horse. An what is't then, co' Eppie. Indeed co'

Willie, its the father o' the mauk ins,  
Eken by its lang lugs.

Now some say this history is too satirical; but it is according to the knowledge of those times, not to say one place by another. The old wives will tell you yet of many such stories of the devil appearing to their grandfathers and grandmothers, and dead wives coming back again to visit their families, long after being dead; So this Buckhaven was once noted for droll exploits; but it is now become more known, and a place now produces the hardiest sailors of any town on the Scots coast. Yet many of the old people in it, still retain the old tincture of their ancient and uncultivated speech, such as Be-go laddie; they are also of a fiery nature, for if you ask any of their wives, Where their College stands, they'll tell you, if your nose was in their a——, your mouth would be at the door of it.

No w it happened when Wise Willie turned anld, he took a great swelling in his wame, and casting up his kail, collops. and cauld fish, that nothing would stand on his stamoch; and a stout stamoch he had, for crabs heads, and scate-bree, er brose in a bridal morning; yet it fail'd him, and he fell sick. None could cure him, nor tell whrt ail'd him till a mounitebank doctor came to Kirkcaldy, that could judge by people's piss the trouble of their person. Wise Willie hearing of his fame, pissed into a bottle, and sent it away with his daughter. The bottle being uncorked, his daughter spilt it on the road, and to conceal her sloth in so doing, pissed in it herself, and on she goes till she came to the stage-doctor when she cried out aloud, Sir doctor, Sir doctor, Sir doctor, here is a bottle of my father's pish, he has a sair guts and needs na drite ony, but spues he eats. It's true I tell you, my do a. The doctor looks at it then says, it's

not your father's surely it's your mo-  
 the's. The deils in the man said  
 she, divna I ken my father frae my  
 mither. Then, said he, he is with  
 child. The deil's in the man, co'  
 she, for my mither bare a de bairns  
 before, dat's no true, sir: fegs ye're  
 a great liar. Hame she comes, and  
 tell'd Willie her father, that the doc-  
 tor said he was wi bairn. O Waes  
 me, quo Willie for I hae a muckle  
 wame, an' I fear it's o'er true, O  
 plague on you Janet, for ye're the  
 father o't, an I am sure to die in the  
 bearing o't. Witty Eppie was sent  
 for, as she was a houdie; an she fand  
 a' Willie's wame, to be sure about it.  
 Indeed co Eppie, ye're the first man  
 e'er I saw wi' bairn afore, an how  
 ye'll bear it, I dinna ken; but I  
 would drink salt-sea water an drown  
 it in my guts: for if men get ance  
 thr gate o' bearing weans themselves,  
 they ll seek nae mair wives. So Wil-  
 lie prank salt sea-water till his guts  
 was like to rive, and out he got to ease

himself among the kail; and with the terrible noise of his farting, up starts a mauken behind him, which thought it was shot: Willie seeing her jump o'er the dyke, thought it was a child brought forth, and cries out, come back my dear and be christened, and dinna rin to the hills to be a Pagan. So Willie grew better every day thereafter, being brought to bed in the kail-yard; but his daughter was brought to bed some months after, which was the cause of the doctor's mistake.

Now Wise Willie had a daughter ca'd Roloughin' Couching Jenny, because she spak thick sax words at 3 times, half sense and half nonsense; as her own records will bear witness. She being with child, was delivered of a bonny lassie; and all the wives in the town cried out, Be-go laddie, its just lik its ain father, Lang Sandy Fa'son (or Thomson) we ken by its lang nose; for Sandy had a great

muckle red nose, like a lobster's tae, bowed at the point like a hawk's neb, and Sandy himsel said, that it was surely his, or some ither body's, but he had used a' his birr at the getting o't; to try his abilities, being the first time e'er he was at sic a business before, and when he had done a' that man could do at it, he said it was nonsense: and shame fa' him but he would rather row his boat round the Bass and back again, or he'd do the like again, for wise Willie gade wude at the wean, and said it had mair ill nature than the auldest wife about the town; for it pissed the bed, shit the bed, spew'd the bed, and skiri'd like a wild cat, and kept him frae his night's rest, and the auld hags about the town, ca'd him Sandy the bairn's daddy; and a' the young gillie-gaukie lassies held out their fingers and cried, Ti hi hi Sandy, the kirk will kittle your hips for that: an after a', the blear-eye'd bell-man came bladdering about the bustock-meal, sum-

moned him and her before the haly band, a court that was held in the kirk on Saturday morning: and all the herd laddies sound about cried Ay, ay, Sandy pay the bull-sillea or we'll cut the cow's tail awa'. So poor Sandy suffered sadly in the flesh, besides the penalty and kirk penance.

But Wise Willie had pity on them, and gade wi them to the Kirk-court, what learned folks call the Session. Jenny was first call'd upon, and in she goes, where a' the haly band was convened, elders and younger deacons, and dog-payers, keeping the door, the cankerdest carles that could be gotten between Dysart and Duby-side, white heads and bald heads, sitting wantin bonnets, wi their white-headed staves and hodden grey jockey coats about them.

Mess John says, Come away Janet, we're waiting on you here.



Min. Now Janet, where was this bairn gotten? You must tell us plainly

Jan. A deed sir, it was gotten at the black stanes, at the cheek o' the crab holes.

Mess John stares at her, not knowing the place but some of the elders did. Then said he, O Janet but the devil was busy with you at that time.

Jan. A by my fegs sir, that's a great lie ye're telling now, mightna we learn to do the thing married folk do without the deil holding us.

Whisht, whisht, cried they, ye should be scourged, fause loonquain it thou is, ye're speaking nonsense.



*Jan.* De deil's i' the carles, for you and your ministers are liars, when ye say it is de deil it was helping Sandy and me to get de bairn.

Come, come, said they, pay down the Kirk-dues, and come back to the stool the morn; the price is four pund and a groat to the bell-man.

*Jan.* The auld thief speed the dearth o't sir, far less might sair you and your bell-man baith. O but this be a world indeed, when poor honest fouk maun pay for making us o' their ain a---. Ye misca the poor deil ahint his back, an gies him de wyte of a' de ill in de kintry, bastard bairns and every thing; an if it be sae as ye say, ye may thank de diel for that four pund and a groat I hae gien ye; that gars your pat play brown, an gets ye jockey coats, and purt-handed sarks, an white headed staves, when

my father's pat wallops up rough  
bear and blue water.

The woman is mad, said they for  
this money is all giv'n to the poor of  
the parish.

*Jan.* The poor of the parish ! fient  
heit ye gie them but wee pic'les o'  
pease meal, didna I see'ti' their pocks,  
and the minister's wife gies naething  
ava to unco beggars, but bids them  
gae to their ain parishes : and yet ye'll  
tak the purse frae us for naething but  
playing the loon a wee or they be mar-  
ried, and syne cock them up to be loo-  
ked on and laugh'd at by every body :  
a deil speed you and your justice sir.  
Hute, tute, ye re a' coming on me  
like a wheen colley dogs hunting awa  
a poor ragget chapman frae the door.  
So out she goes cursing and greeting.  
Sandy is next called upon, and in he  
goes.

*Min.* Now Saunders, you must tell

us how the child was gotten ?

San. A now Mess John sir, ye hae bairns o' your ain. how did you get them? but yours are a' laddies, and mine is but a lassie; if you tell me how you got your laddies I'll tell you how I got my lassie, and then we'll be baith alike good at the business.

The minister looks at him and says Hute, tute, baunders, lay down four pund and a groat, and come back the morn to the stool and give satisfaction to the congregation; you had more need to be seeking repentance for that abominable sin of uncleanness than speaking o' me.

San. Well here's your siller sir, I hae gotten but poor penny-worths for't an ye tell me to repent for't; what the auld thief needs I repent, when I'm gamin to marry the woman and then I hae to did o'er again every day or there'll be nae peace in the house: figs its nonsense to pay siller repent and did again too; a fine advice indeed, master minister! and

that's the way the like o' you live.

Now sir, says wise Willie, ye manna put them on the black creepy till they be married, they've suffered enough at ae time.

A-weel, a-weel, said they, but they must marry very soon.

I trus says Sandy, ye'll be wanting mair clink; foul haet ye do for naething here.

The next exploit was an action at law, against the goodman of Muir-edge a farmer who lived near by, that kept sheep and swine. His sheep came down and broke their yards, and ate up their kail; the wild hares they thought belonged to the same man, as they ran to his house when they were hunted. The swine came very often in about their houses, seeing fish guts or ony thing they could get: So it happened when one of the children was sitting easing itself, that one of the swine tumbled it over, and bit a piece out of its backside! The whole town rose in an uproar against

poor grunkie, as they called her, and takes her before Wise Willie. Willie took an ax and cut two or three inches off her long nose. Now says Willie I trow I hae made thee something like another beast, thou had sic a lang mouth before, it wad a frighted a verry de'il to look at ye, but now ye're fac'd like a little horse or a cow. The poor sow ran home roaring, all blood, and wanting the nose; which caused Muiredge to warn them in before my Lord. So the wives that had their kail eaten, appeared first in the court, complaining against Muiredge. Indeed, my Lord, said they Muiredge is no a good man when he is sic an ill neighbour; he keeps black hares and white hares, little wee brown backed hares, wi' white arsés, and louse wagging horns; they creep in a our gush-holes and ates our kail, when we cry pussie, pussie, they rin hame to Muiredge, but I'll gar my colley haud them by the fit, and I'll haud them by the horn, and pou the hair aff them, and

send them hame wanting the skin, as  
 he did Sowen Tammy's wee Sandy,  
 fer co'lin o' his pease, he took aff the  
 poor laddie's coat, an sae did he een.  
 And Willie said, if you were a sow my  
 Lord, an me sitting driting an you to  
 bite my arse, sudna I hae amends o'  
 you for that? od my Lord ye wadna  
 hae a bit out o' your arse for twenty  
 merks: ye maun een gar Mairidge  
 gie ten merks to buy a plaster to heal  
 the poor bit weans arse again.

Well said, Willie, says my Lord;  
 but who puts on the sow's nose again.

A fegs, my Lord, said Willie,  
 she's honester like wentin't, an she'll  
 bite nae mae arses wi't. An ye had  
 hane a nose, my Lord as lang as the  
 sow had, ye'd been obliged to ony bo-  
 dy it wad cut a piece af't.

A gentleman coming past near their  
 town asked one of their wives where  
 their college stood said she, gie me a  
 shilling, an I'll let you see baith sides  
 o't. He gives her the shilling, think-  
 ing to see something curious. Now

says she, there's the one side of your shilling, and there's the other; so it is mine now

There was a custom in Bucky harbour, when they got a hearty drink that they went down to dance among the boats, two or three of the oldest went into a boat to see the rest dance, and when they admitted a burgher there was always a dance. One day they admitted gly'd Rob, who was a warlock, and made them all stop their dancing, for which he was carried before Wise Willie to answer for that for which he was banished to the island of May to carry coals to the Light House.

F I N I S.