

TAM O'SHANTER.

A TALE.

BY ROBERT BURNS.

Brownie's and of Bogie's full is this Book.

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

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TAM O'SHANTER.

WHEN Chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neibours neibours meet,
As market-days are wearin late,
And fock begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And getting fou and unco nappy,
We think na on the lang Scotch miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gath'ring her brows like gath'ring storm
Nursin her wiath to keep it warnt.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice;
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blemm,
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That every nag was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's house, even on Sunday
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday
She prophesy'd, that late or soon,
Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon
Or catch'd wi' warlocks i' the mirk,

Alloway's auld haunted kirk!
 O, gentle dames! ye gars me greet,
 Think how many counsels sweet,
 Many lengthen'd sage advices,
 My husband frae the wife despises!
 At to our tale! Ae market night,
 Had got planted unco right
 By an ingle, bleezing finely,
 Reaming swats, that drank divinely,
 At his elbow, Souter Johnny,
 Ancient, trusty, drouthly cran,
 Lo'ed him like a very brither;
 Ye had been fou for weeks thegither,
 Might drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
 Aye the ale was growing better:
 Landlady and Tam grew gracious,
 Favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
 Souter tauld his queerest stories;
 Landlord's laugh was ready chorus;
 Storm without might rair and rustle.
 He did not mind the storm a whistle.
 He, mad to see a man so happy,
 Drown'd himsel amang the nappy.
 Bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
 Minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
 Angels may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
 Far a' the ills o' life victorious!
 But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
 Like the snow falls in the river,
 A moment white—then melts for ever;
 Like the borealis race,
 That flit e'er you can point their place;
 Like the rainbow's lovely form,

Evanishing amid the storm—
 Nae man can tether time or tide;
 The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
 That hour, o' night's black arch, the key-stane
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
 And sic a night he takes the road in,
 As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in!

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last,
 The rattlin' show'rs rose on the blast;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
 Loud, deep and lang the thunder bellow'd!
 That night a child might understand
 The deil had bis'ness on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare Meg,
 A better never lifted leg,
 Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
 Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
 Whyles haddin' fast his guid blue bonnet,
 Whyles croonin' owre some auld Scots sonnet
 Whyles glow'rin' round wi' prudent care,
 Lest bogles catch him unawares;
 Kirk-Alloway was drawin' nigh,
 Whar ghaists and howlets nightly cry—

By this time he was cross'd the ford,
 Whar in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
 And past the birks and muckle stane,
 Whar drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
 And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
 Whar hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
 And near the thorn, aboon the well,
 Whar Mungo's mother hang'd hersel—
 Before him Doon pours a' his floods,
 The doublin storm roars through the woods;
 The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;

Near and more near the thunders roll
 When, glimmerin thro' the groaning trees
 Kirk Alloway! seem'd in a breeze!
 Thro' ilka bore the beams o' glad
 And loud resounded mirth and dancin.
 Inspirin bold John Barleycorn!
 What dangers thou can mak us scorn!
 Wi' tippeny we fear nae evil;
 Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil!
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle;
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle;
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
 Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,
 She ventur'd forward on the light;
 And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight
 Warlocks and witches in a dance;
 Nae cotillion! brent frae France,
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels,
 Pat life and mettle in their heels:
 A winnock-bunker in the east,
 There sat auld Nick in shape o' a beast;
 A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
 To gie them music was his charge:
 He screw'd the pipes, and gart them skirl,
 Till roof and ratters a' did dirl,—
 Coffins stood round like open presses,
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
 And by some devilish canting spite,
 Each in its cauld hand held a light;
 By which heroic Ham was able bod
 To note upon the dinky table,
 A murderer's shames in gibbet airns;
 A wa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
 Thier, new cistal frae a rape;

Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape! Tom burr burr
 Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted! Five
 Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted! Five
 A garter, which a babe had strangled! Five
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled! Five
 Whom his ain son o' life bereft, Five
 The grey hairs yet stack to the heft! Five
 Three lawyer's tongues turn'd inside-out, Five
 Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clo'! Five
 And priests' hearts, rotten black as muck, Five
 Lay stinkin vile in every neuk! Five
 Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu' boots, Five
 Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu', Five
 As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious, Five
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious! Five
 The piper loud and louder blew, Five
 The dancers quick and quicker flew! Five
 They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
 And koost her duddies to the wark,
 And linkit at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans
 A' plump and strapping in their teens,
 Their sarks, instead o' creechie flannen,
 Been snaw-white se'enteen hunder linen,
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
 That ance were plusia, o' gade blue hair,
 I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdiés,
 For ae blink o' the bonny burdiés!
 But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
 Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal;
 Louping and flinging oin a crummock,
 I wonder't didna turn your stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie,

There was ae wilsome wench and walie,
 That night enlisted in the core,
 Lang after kend on Carrick-shore;
 For, monie a beast to dead she shot,
 And perished manie a bonnie boat,
 And shook baith meikle corn and abbard
 And kept the country-side in fear;
 Her cutty sark o' Haisley-harn,
 That while a lassie she had worn,
 In longitude tho' to'rely scanty,
 It was her best and she was vauntie—
 Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
 That sark she cost for her wee Nannie,
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a her riches)
 Wad e'er hae grac'd a dance o' witches.
 But here my Muse her wing maunicow'r;
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r,
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
 (A souple jade she was and strang),
 And how Tam stood like an bewitch'd,
 And thought his very een enrich'd,
 Ev'n Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main,
 Till first ae caper, syne anither,
 Tam tint his reason a' thegither;
 And roars out, Weel done cutty sarks,
 And in an instant a' was dark,
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied
 When out the hellish legion sallied,
 As bees biz out wi' angry fyke,
 When plund'ring herds assail their byke,
 As open passie's mortal foes,
 When pop! she starts before their nose,
 As eager runs the market crowd,

When Catch the thief's resounds aloud;
So Maggie rins, the witches following;
Wi' mony an eldritch word and hollow sound.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'lt get thy fairin,
In hell they'll roast thee like a heron;
In vain thy Kate awaits thy coming;
Kate soon will be a wae-fu' woman;
Now do thy speedy utmost Meg,
And win the key-stane* o' the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A rinny stream they dare not cross;
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fiend a tail she had to shake;
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam with furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle;
Ae spring brought aff her master Kate,
But left behind her ain grey tail;
The carlin caught her by the ramp,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now wha' this tale o' truth shall opead,
Ilk man and mother's soun tak heed,
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks rin in your mind,
Think ye may buy the joys o'v' dear,
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

* It is a well-known fact, that Witches or any evil spirits have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream. It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with bogles, whatever danger may be in his going forward there is much more danger in turning back.