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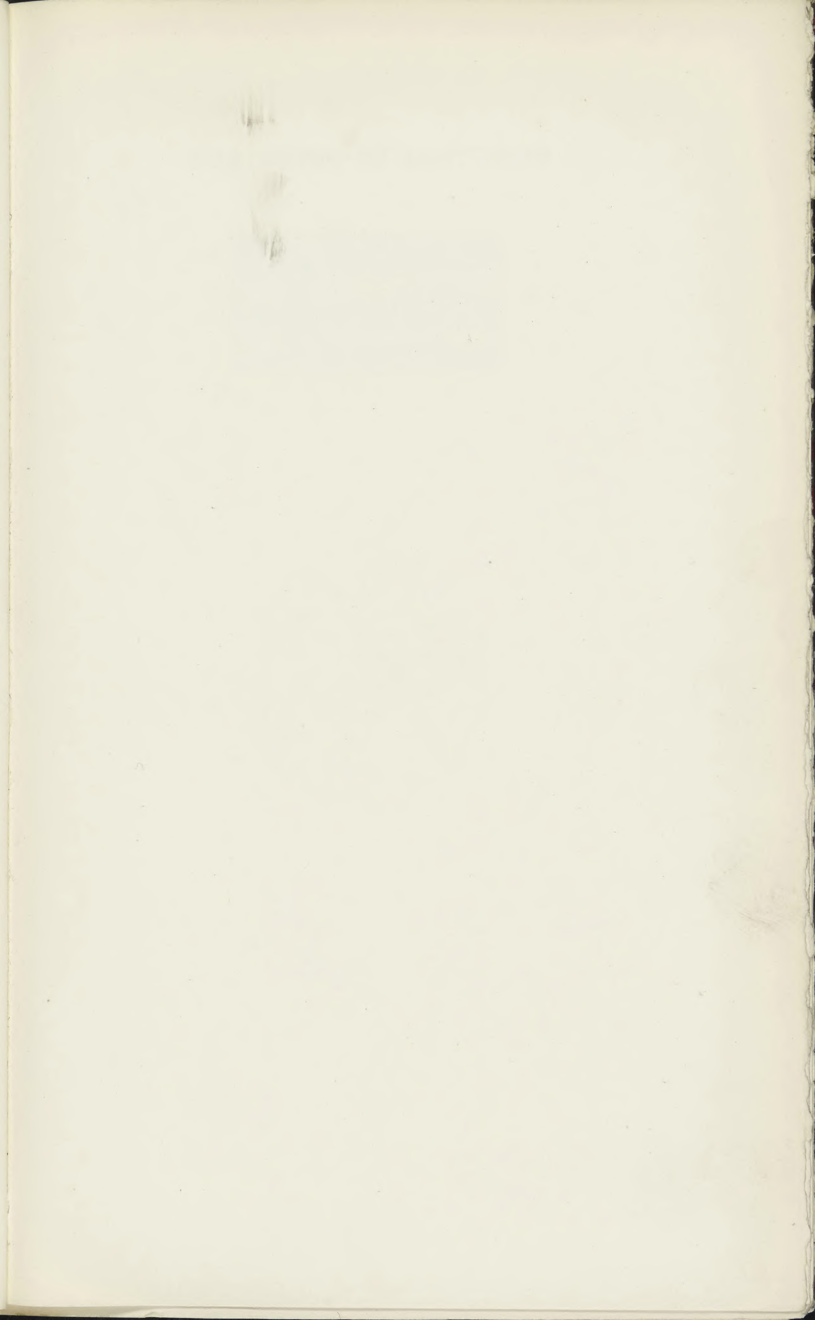

THE DEVIL IN SCOTLAND

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BEING FOUR GREAT SCOTTISH STORIES OF DIABLERIE ALONG WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY AND THIRTY-NINE ORIGINAL WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS

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CONTENTS

THE DEVIL AND HIS FOLK IN SCOTTISH LIFE AND LITERATURE
By DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS - - - - - - - - *page* 1

TAM O' SHANTER
By ROBERT BURNS - - - - - - - - - - *page* 37

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE
By SIR WALTER SCOTT - - - - - - - - *page* 49

THRAWN JANET
By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON - - - - - - *page* 77

THE TALE OF TOD LAPRAIK
By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON - - - - - - *page* 95

THE DEVIL AND HIS FOLK IN SCOTTISH LIFE AND LITERATURE

BY

DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS

THE DEVIL AND HIS FOLK IN SCOTTISH LIFE AND LITERATURE

IT IS NOT TO BE WONDERED AT THAT Scotland should prove so fruitful a field to the student of demonology. It is only natural that the bleak, harsh North with its long winters and flickering summers, its dreary rains and mists over shores and isles, its wild mountains, impassable moors and 'dowie' dales, should be haunted by grimmer superstitions, peopled by phantoms more malevolent than the richer, more fertile plains of the South. The old kindly fairy folk of Southern folklore are seldom met with in the North. Fell Goblins, gruesome Brownies, Spunkies that mean hurt not mischief, Kelpies that lurk by the ford to seize the unwary passenger, Banshees, May Moulachs and others haunt the treeless hills and lochsides. These are not like the Elves and Fairies of gentler climes a race apart, distinct from the Devils of Hell as from God and His angels, and interfering in the affairs of mortal men more to tease than to destroy. In Scotland they are definitely allied to the legions of Satan. Satan is their lord and Elfland is but one of his realms.

It is true that Elfhame, the ancient court of the Fairies, retains in the ballads and in the folklore of the peasantry something of its old beauty and even of its old gaiety, its music and dancing; but the Elves are dangerous to castle and cottage, for they steal the children of men wherewith to pay the sacrifice they owe to the lords of Hell.

'O pleasant is the faery land
For those that in it dwell,
But aye at end of seven years
They pay a teind to Hell,'

and the beauty of Elfhame's Queen is a snare to the souls of men. For one kiss of her rosy lips True Thomas must forfeit the joys of Middle-Earth. Nor is there any question of her malice when she finds that one of the mortals she had stolen had been won away.

'But what I ken this night, Tam Lin,
Gin I had kent yestreen
I wad ta'en out thy heart of flesh
And put in a heart o' stane.'

The old Scots ballads, whatever their origin, are essentially aristocratic in character. The folk of Elfhame are radiantly apparelled in green and blue and girdled with gold. They wear diadems upon their yellow hair and bear themselves like the children of Princes and Earls. But there is none of this courtly glitter in the 'guid nichbouris' who appeared to men and women accused before assizes of communicating with the enemies

of God. Warlocks and witches knew the fairies well. They had access to the fairy mounds and acquaintance with the Queen herself. To them the fairies were not the exquisite and princely figures of the balladic tradition but substantial, respectable folk, stout and proper in appearance and deeply versed in medicinal lore. The Queen was as wanton as she was handsome; but she was a sage midwife and freely imparted magical prescriptions, to use which was to gain a wide, but dangerous and often fatal reputation. But the Devil is all-powerful and even the Queen is his vassal. Elfin workers prepare the elf-arrow-heads which the Devil distributes to his witches, and fairy gold, which loses its value in an hour, is the sole currency.

But Faery is a realm remote, known only to poets and witches and certainly not to Presbyterians, and it meant little to the Reformers of the Kirk in Scotland who first set out to fight the agents of the Devil upon earth. Witchcraft is the main, almost the sole preoccupation of the demonologists of the Reformation and later. The 'Black Genevan' ministers could smell out a witch like beagles. Perhaps there is something in Calvinism that makes for a quicker sense of the diabolical, and Chesterton, if my memory is not at fault, talks somewhere of that religion which Theologians call Calvinism and Christians Devil Worship.

In Scotland the witch-fires first begin to blaze after the triumph of John Knox and the Reformation, and in no country did they blaze more steadily and for so long a period of time. It is true that eighty years before Pope Innocent VIII had given the first impetus to the detection and destruction of sorcerers and witches, and it is

also true that folk accused of these crimes had suffered death in Scotland before the break with Rome. Twelve 'mean' men and women had been burned for conspiring with the Earl of Mar, and Janet Lady Glamis had suffered death upon the Castle Hill of Edinburgh in 1537. But the crime of which they were guilty was treason, not sorcery. If they had not been great people and dangerous, the one the King's brother, the other of the house of Douglas, they would not have been tried nor the charge of sorcery emphasised.

Before the Parliament of 1563 when the Reformers instigated Queen Mary to publish a Statute raising it to the status of a crime punishable by death, witchcraft had only been a capital offence when associated with treason or poisoning. Henceforth not only to use any form of sorcery or witchcraft, but to claim to use it or to seek any help or advice of any who used or claimed to use it, was a crime requiring the penalty of death.

Not only in Scotland but all over Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a witch-panic. Satan and his servants were never more actively at work. No one, it was believed, was too noble or too mean, too old or too young to be an agent of the Evil One. Great lords and ladies sought his aid through necromancy, as did the broken and the foul. Mothers dedicated their children at birth or offered their daughters at the age of twelve, and old philosophers, Faust-like, surrendered to him their hope of Heaven in order to recapture the sweetness of departed youth. To the great Sabbaths of sorcerers all ranks of Society flocked, and even ecclesiastics were present, to the scandal of the Church. Upon a thousand beds Incubi and Succubi

weighed obscenely, and men confessed to have lived all their lives with Lamias and women to have entered freely into wedlock with the Devil. Chroniclers are obsessed with the idea of diablerie, and in Germany great artists like Dürer and Baldung Grien show a marked predilection for such subjects.

High or low, those whose illnesses puzzled the doctors of that day confidently ascribed them to enchantment, convinced that not far away lurked enemies who roasted puppet-images by slow fires or stabbed them with pins, and, as the wax dissolved or the pins entered, so their bodies wasted or were convulsed with agony. The angels of God seemed to have deserted the field and left it free to demons, and in the Psychomachia, the everlasting struggle of Good and Evil for the soul of Man, the odds were apparently on the side of Satan.

The Mediaeval Church had been opposed to Rationalism, but the Reformation did nothing to liberate imprisoned Thought. No Pope or Inquisitor of the Roman Church was more intolerant of free thought than Calvin, and Theology with its loads of obsolete conclusions inhibited the development of scientific investigation. To deny the evidence of witchcraft was to deny the validity of the Gospels. Was there not in the Old Testament a Witch of Endor, in the New a Simon Magus? Does not the Bible say 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'? Those, in short, who dared to be doubtful of evidence or who hesitated to condemn men or women to death on mere presumption were condemned as Atheists and Sadducees. King James VI of Scotland, the Royal Demonologist, hotly denounces the sceptical in his famous Dialogue, saying 'to spare the life and

not to strike when God bids strike . . . is not only unlawful, but doubtlesse no lesse sinne in a Magistrate, nor it was in Saules sparing of Agag.'

And of course his opponents, the sceptics like Reginald Scot, were impeded in argument, because to have questioned the religious beliefs behind the Inquisition upon Witchcraft would have exposed them to the charge of Atheism. Moreover, opposed to the few and unimportant doubters were nearly all the great minds of these times, Hale, Henry More, Selden, Boyle, Raleigh, even Sir Thomas Browne, the exposer of 'Vulgar Errors', and Bacon, who actually gives a recipe for a witches' ointment.

Scotland early had wizards and witches of eminence. Dumbarton Rock came where it is because witches had seized and hurled a vast boulder at St. Patrick. The weird sisters had accosted Macbeth on the blasted heath near Forres, and King Duffus, a dim and distant monarch, is also said to have felt the power of Moray witches. Thomas of Ercildoune had learned from his paramour, the Queen of Elfhame, these gifts of poetic prophecy by which he is remembered. Sir Michael Scott of Balweary was famous in the thirteenth century at the court of Frederic, *Stupor Mundi*, lectured at Padua and had the great honour of inclusion in the *Inferno* of Dante.

> 'The next who is so slender in the flanks
> Was Michael Scott, who of a verity
> Of magical allusions knew the game.'

So great were the crimes of Lord Soulis, that his castle of Hermitage sank deep in its foundations, shocked at witnessing such hellish 'cantrips'. Rope would

not bind nor steel wound the body of Lord Soulis, so, when his enemies put him to death at Nine-Stane-Rig, they rolled him in sheets of lead and boiled him.

Witches had warned James I before his death. They, too, in their flattering, deceitful way, had prophesied to his enemy, the Earl of Athole, that he would be crowned as a king before the people. And so he was; but the crown was a diadem of red-hot iron and an executioner placed it on his head. The third James was supernaturally warned against his brother and the fourth against women and the expedition that ended at Flodden. Everyone, through Sir Walter Scott, knows how the weird man confronted the King at Linlithgow, saying that his mother had sent him with the warning. His mother must have been the Queen of Elfhame. Equally well known is the proclamation at the Cross in Edinburgh, before the battle took place, of the names of those who fell at Flodden. Pitscottie calls it the 'Summondis of Platcok' or Pluto, for it seems that in that comprehensive Hell of the Scottish Middle Ages lurked all the old gods and goddesses, classical and Scandinavian, driven underground by the triumph of Christianity.

At the troublous time of the Scottish Reformation accusations of the use of sorcery were common from both sides. Lady Buccleuch was said to have used witchcraft to urge Queen Mary to the murder of Darnley, and Knox himself was not exempt from charges of sorcery. He was said to have raised up ghosts in the kirkyard at St. Andrews, when an apparition of Satan, horned, terrified his attendant out of his mind. He was said to have enchanted his third wife, Marjorie, Lord

Ochiltree's daughter; for how, it was asked, could an old, venomous, prodigiously ugly man have won the heart of a young and lovely lady, and he a man of no pedigree and she of the blood and name of Stewart? No wonder Queen Mary was enraged at the match.

And then there was the Countess of Atholl, who must have been a witch or in league with them, for when she came to lie in at Edinburgh Castle she cast her child-birth pains upon another lady. This transference of childbirth and other pains was a frequent practice of witches, it being possible to transfer them not only to other women, but to cats, dogs, cattle,—men even. For example, the lady of Newbattle was a notorious friend of witches. She bore her lord thirty-one children, then, having a boil or sore upon her breast, the lady consulted witches. She was advised that the sore could be put upon another, but it must be upon one she loved. The lady agreeing, the boil fell upon her husband himself, who died in great misery.

These three fascinating quartos, Pitcairn's *Scottish Criminal Trials*, known to students simply as *Pitcairn*, contain many accounts of trials for witchcraft. Many of the persons 'delatit' for trial are of humblest extraction, many again are of birth and great connections. The most famous case of them all, perhaps, is the trial of the North Berwick witches in the reign of James VI. This society of witches had made great efforts to encompass the death of the King, by poison, shipwreck, and by working upon a puppet-figure. Several at least of the witches were ladies of rank and fortune, and it is generally agreed (in fact it was confessed by one of their number) that behind the society and directing its activi-

ties was the Earl of Bothwell. This was Francis, son of Lord James Stewart, a half-brother of Queen Mary, by his wife Lady Jean Hepburn, sister of the infamous James, Earl of Bothwell. Inheriting his uncle's estates and followed by a band of Border reivers, Hepburns and Scotts, Francis Lord Bothwell was a constant menace to the peace of mind of his cousin, the King. James not only feared Bothwell as a desperate adventurer, with a terrifying habit of bursting sword in hand into the royal presence; but as a notorious wizard. Indeed, he actually seized and imprisoned the latter on the charge of witchcraft, but prisons did not easily hold Scots lords at that time. The discovery of the North Berwick organisation of witches wildly excited King James and convinced him of the dangers and prevalence of witchcraft throughout the realm. To the confessions wrung out of the conspirators by means of torture James owed much of that intimate knowledge of demonology which he revealed in his Treatise, and Shakespeare many hints for the witch-scenes in *Macbeth*.

The principal figures in the North Berwick witch-society were three ladies of undoubted dignity and a warlock called Dr. Fian, a schoolmaster at Saltpans. Under torture they confessed to some weird escapades, dancing with the Devil by night in the churchyard, making images and charming them, preparing poisons, flying over the sea in sieves and hurling into it a baptised cat in order to raise storms to shipwreck the vessel in which King James was returning with his Danish bride. The King was present himself at the trials, fairly goggling with excitement, we may be sure. On hearing that one Geillis Duncan had led the dance playing on a

trump, he caused her to play the same tune before him 'to his great pleasure and amazement.' Doubtless, too, he was flattered to hear how very serious a foe the Devil considered him, declaring when various charms proved unavailing that the King was 'un homme de Dieu.' Credulous as he was, James protested against some of the disclosures of the witch, Agnes Sampson, but she took him aside and reassured him of their veracity by telling him the actual words he had exchanged with the Queen on the first night of their marriage at Upsala in Norway. 'Whereat the Kinges Maiestie wondered greatlye, and swore by the living God, that he beleeved that all the Divels in hell could not have discovered the same.'

The greatest of all witch-persecutors was the Scottish Solomon, and, both before and after his accession to the throne of England, hundreds were strangled and burnt on charges of witchcraft and sorcery. During the reign of Charles I and under the Commonwealth there was a definite falling off in the number of trials. Cromwell was, by all the standards of his time, a remarkably tolerant man. 'In the bowels of Christ consider that ye be not mistaken' was his characteristically masculine advice to fanatical Presbyterian ministers on a certain occasion, and the magistrates of the Commonwealth hesitated to condemn women of *malae famae* merely on presumption. But Oliver's enemies were convinced that only a pact with the Devil could account for his career of victory. He was seen in a wood before Worcester fight pledging himself to Satan for a term of seven more years of triumph, and it was believed that he died so many years later to a day, and that in the terrible

storm that raged that night the Devil came to carry him off.

With the return of the Nell-Gwynn Defender came a renewal of witch-panic. In the year 1661 on one single day not less than fourteen special commissions were appointed to deal locally with cases of reputed witchcraft, while in the first eight months of 1662 fifty more additional commissions were at work, each dealing with from one to ten reputed witches. In Scotland the next twenty years were marked by terrible persecutions, and during the 'Killing Times' the Devil was astonishingly lively and full of wile, his doings being recorded in detail and with much beating of the breast and moralizing by the Rev. Robert Law in his *Memorialls*.

Slowly the panic waned. The last witch-trial took place in Sutherland, in 1722, and thirteen years later the Statutes against witchcraft were repealed, an act of enlightenment which gave serious offence to the Seceders from the Established Church of Scotland, as 'contrary to the express Law of God.'

The typical witch of English popular tradition is, like Addison's Moll White, a poor withered beldame at once the butt and the terror of every village clown. But Scots witches were a lustier band. They did not put themselves in the power of Satan only when life had broken and bleared them. To many, perhaps to most witches, the religion of the Devil seemed a more attractive alternative to that of God. The Devil appeared to have given them power as midwives and quack doctors, power to cure and to hurt far beyond the scope of others. From the charges made against them it is clear that often they used this power only for good; but its mere possession,

coming as it did from an evil source, was fatal in the eyes of the law. The witches could be avenged on those who abused them or those whose felicity they envied, they could transfer pains, destroy crops, dry-up cows and nurses, and, as a secret society with anti-social aims, they could league to annoy enforcers of the law. But such power seems petty to be purchased at such awful cost. Its possessors were no richer or more comfortable for it themselves. Their Master was most parsimonious. The money he gave was fairy gold and turned into slate-stones, horse-dung or other rubbish, and if he feasted his folk it was always meanly, unless it was in the houses and of the viands of others.

But born witches or warlocks craved not for material gain but for sensual delights. For them there was the sadistic ecstasy, the thrill of all the devilish rites and observances, the Bacchanalian orgies of the great Sabbaths, the social pleasure of periodic meetings with their fellow Satanists, the excitement of secrecy, danger and sin, the charm of all things horrible. The description that Stevenson gives of Tod Lapraik dancing alone on the desolate Bass to the screaming of the solans seems a good enough reason for the loyalty of his servants to the Devil.

'It was joy was in the creature's heart: the joy o' hell, I daursay; joy whatever. Mony a time I have askit mysel', why witches and warlocks should sell their sauls (whilk are their maist dear possessions) and be auld, duddy, wrunkl't wives or auld, feckless, doddered men; and then I mind upon Tod Lapraik dancing a' thae hours by his lane in the black glory of his heart. Nae doubt they burn for it in muckle hell, but they have a

grand time here of it, whatever!—and the Lord forgie us!'

How are we going to account for the great mass of witch literature, much of it actual confessions, and these by no means always made after torture? In the days of witch persecution of course the orthodox undoubtedly believed in an actual Devil, lord of the legions of Hell, holding sway over the souls and bodies of wicked mortals and able to assume any chosen shape and to endow his servants with certain supernatural powers. At the assizes able lawyers, ministers and educated gentlemen sat tingling with horror and agape with eagerness for diablerie, while witches explained how, having enchanted a three-legged stool to take their place beside their husbands, they arose, anointed themselves and hurtled through the air on broomsticks, sieves, or even upon human beings shod as horses, to the Sabbath of the Sorcerers. Believing as they did in the power of the Devil and the literal truth of the Bible, the judges found no revelations absurd or incredible.

To-day scepticism is almost universal, and all confessions and testimonies are set aside as absolutely valueless as evidence. Those like the celebrated Major Weir, who confessed entirely freely, are now said to have been absolutely mad, while the confessions of warlocks and witches forcibly brought to trial are said to have been wrung by torture out of minds already unhinged by wretchedness and foulest superstition. To-day no school child believes in the existence of witches any more than in gryphons or other heraldic monsters.

Nevertheless, there was a strong basis of fact behind even the wildest imaginings of neurotic women anxious

to end their sufferings by death. It is a commonplace of anthropology that side by side with the religion of the Church there existed throughout the Middle Ages fertility and other cults of immemorial antiquity. These cults survived naturally in remote rural districts, doubtless appealed most to the emotionally unstable and had their priests and high priests. The cult had become degraded; but many apparently drew from its service much the same satisfaction as Christians from the service of their religion. It is possible that many who suffered death for sorcery were neither insane nor conscience-maddened; but felt the same call to martyrdom in the interests of their God that had so often prompted Christians to self-immolation.

It is certain, in fact, that witches and warlocks met together in secret to practise certain rites; but who were the 'Devils' presiding over the meetings? That they were actual black angels seems unthinkable to us, nor is it possible to believe that they were mere figments of hysterical imaginations. Is it possible that they were men, professional occultists, Masters of Satanism, using their superior knowledge and cunning to ensure the obedience of their flock? Many careful students of demonology believe that they were. Burns Begg, who edited the trials of the witches at Crook of Devon, Kinross-shire (1662), was so bold as to suggest that the Devil at this village was merely an unscrupulous charlatan who found some profit in the devotion of a company of men and women, no matter how penurious. He suggested that the neighbourhood probably abounded in needy adventurers, ex-soldiers, etc., who might have seen the chance to gull bewildered villagers. But what

profits could this Man-Devil have possibly made, for the operations of his society were merely destructive? Moreover, to no two of his folk did the Crook of Devon Devil appear in the same form. To one he was old, to another young, to a third black and burly, to a fourth small with a blue bonnet, and so on. What needy adventurer could have made so many disguises? In fact, as Burns Begg himself admitted, the only point these devils have in common is amorousness. The carnal appetite of the Devil, here as elsewhere, is portentous, 'not even the octogenarian Margaret Hoggin being neglected by him in his indiscriminate gallantry.' Miss M. A. Murray, who has studied the subject from the anthropological point of view, sees in the regular sexual intercourse of the Devil and his witches evidence of the survival of a phallic cult of great antiquity. The devout folk who judged the witches never failed to interrogate them eagerly upon this subject, and invariably elicited the information that the Devil's nature was cold. This too requires some explaining away if we are to believe that the devils were men.

There were several tests by which reputed witches could be detected. Of these the most certain was the mark or 'Devil's claw'. Every witch had an insensitive spot upon her skin into which a pin could be driven without pain or effusion of blood. In the mid-seventeenth century when the persecution was at its height, Matthew Hopkins in England and John Kincaid in Scotland were the most famous professional witch-detectors. Armed with a pin they searched reputed witches for spots insensible to pain and seldom failed to find them. 'Am not I ane honest woman?' asked one

poor victim of Kincaid into whose back a pin was sticking. Nowadays, doctors recognise that in certain types of patient certain places of the skin are callous through what is known as 'hysterical anaesthesia'; but possession of such spots was fatal to men and women of ill repute in former days. Less important evidences than these stigmata were inability to weep even crocodile tears and inability to drown. Unfortunate old women were often ducked, and sometimes with great brutality, to see if they would drown. If they did they were innocent. If they floated they were guilty, for, wrote King James, 'they cannot drown who have shaken off them the sacred water of Baptisme.'

In Scotland, witches were banded in 'covens' or 'coveys'. The word 'coven' is probably a derivative of the verb to 'convene'. Thirteen was the number of a 'coven', including the Devil, an 'officer', often a warlock, a 'maiden', and ten other witches or warlocks. The 'maiden' sat at the Devil's left hand, like the continental 'Reine du Sabbat'. She was his favourite, his mistress, and probably young and comely as witches sometimes

were. Isobel Gowdie of Auldearn in Morayshire, the most informative of Scots witches, declared that 'We doe no great mater without owr Maiden—Quhan we ar at meat or in any uther place quhatevir the Maiden of each Coven sittis abow the rest, nixt the Divell.' The 'officer' probably saw to the arrangements of meetings, etc., and Dr. Fian was clearly the 'officer' of the North Berwick coven, being referred to as the 'regester to the Divell.'

When he had found a likely candidate for admission to the society, the Devil, choosing favourable time and place, would put himself in her way, urging her to renounce her Baptism and become his servant. If convinced, the woman (I have referred chiefly to women, for witches greatly out-numbered warlocks) would then place one hand upon the crown of her head and the other upon the soles of her feet, and thereby signify the surrender of all between, body and soul, to her new lord. Probably after this he rebaptised her and gave her his Mark. Isobel Gowdie, the Moray witch, confessed that the Devil marked her on the shoulder, 'suked out my blood at that mark and spowted it in his hand, and sprinkling it on my head, said, "I baptise the, Janet, in my awin name".' Scottish Devils always gave their folk a new name in Baptism, and it was considered a terrible breach of etiquette thereafter to call a witch by her Christian name. At North Berwick the Devil caused trouble among his servants by calling a certain Robert Grierson by that name instead of by his Satanic name of 'Ro the Comptroller alias Rob the Rowar', whereupon the witches and warlocks 'all ran hirdie-girdie and wer angrie.'

Following the Baptism was the 'osculum infame,' the kissing of the Devil's posterior by his devotees. For instance, at North Berwick in 1590, 'eftir that the deuell had endit his admonitions he cam down out of the pulpit and causit all the company to com and kiss his ers, quhilk they said was cauld lyk yce.' Isobel Gowdie said, 'Somtym he vold be lyk a stirk, a bull, a deir, a rae, or a dowg and he vold hold up his taill untill we wold kiss his arce.' And it appears that not only the Devil but the lovely Queen of Elfhame sometimes exacted this homage, for, at Aberdeen in 1597, in the charge against Andro Man, a warlock, we read that 'they quha convenis with thame kissis Christsonday and the Quene of Elphenis airss, as thow did thyselff.' Christsonday was the Devil's name in the Aberdeen coven, for he rejoiced in giving himself various and often very homely names.

Sometimes he held Black Mass with his flock, when the wine was blood or moor-water, the Bible was the Black Book and the exhortations were not to good but to bad works, not to repentance of sins but to their commission. Sometimes, as at North Berwick, the service

was in the church, and the Devil preached from the pulpit. Failure to attend meetings aroused his wrath. Alexander Hamilton (convicted 1630) was thrashed for missing an assembly; but reasonable excuses were considered. 'Sir, I could wyn na soner,' pleaded Beigis Tod of North Berwick, and elsewhere we find 'The devill asked at Kathrine Moore quhair her Husband was that he came not; she answered there was a young bairne at home and that they could not both come.'

These Scots devils were good fellows, too, fond of dancing and drinking, piping and flirting. We read that the Devil 'imbracet the said Margaret Lauder in his armes at ye drinking of ye beir and put his arme about hir waist.' He frequently kissed the Forfar witches. At one of their feasts there was heavy drinking and great glee, 'and the divill made much of them all, but especialle of Mary Rynd,' and, in a wild dance in the churchyard, the fun was so great that a blind man danced, staff in hand, as nimbly as any of the company, 'and made also great miriement by singing his old ballads, and that Isobell Shyrrie did sing her song called Tinkletum Tankletum, and that the divill kist every one of the women.'

At Aberdeen the witches danced round the town crosses, the Devil supplying the music, and Thomas Leyis was accused because he led the ring 'and dang the said Kathren Mitchell because she spoiled your dance and ran not so fast about as the rest.' At Craigellachie they danced in a ring round a great stone. At North Berwick they danced 'endlong the Kirk yaird, and Gelie Duncan played on a trump, John Fian, missellit (disguised) led the ring; Agnes Sampson and her daughters and all the

rest following . . . to the number of seven score persons.' Seven score! what a dance that must have been, and, as they danced they sang

> 'Cummer go ye before, Cummer, go ye,
> Gif ye will not go before, Cummer, let me.'

At Auldearn the Devil danced hand in hand with the maiden who was nicknamed 'Over the dyke with it,' because, when the dance was 'Gillatrypes', the Devil and she would cry 'Over the dyke with it.'

At an assembly in the Pentland Hills the Devil preceded the crowd 'in the likeness of a rough tanny Dog, playing on a pair of Pipes. The Spring he played was The Silly bit Chicken, gar cast a pickle and it will grow meikle.' But the best sport of all was the coming down hill, for, then, the Devil 'carried the candle in his bottom under his tail, which played ey wig wag wig wag.' This devil of the Pentland Hills is of course no other than Burns's

> 'towsy tyke, black, grim and large,
> to gie them music was his charge.'

Animals playing the pipes were of course favourite subjects for grotesque-loving mediaeval carvers in stone and wood.

How exciting must have been the skirling of the pipes to dancers, dancing widdershins by night in some eerie kirkyard beside the graves they had violated. We may be sure that the Devil was a great exponent on the pipes. He was believed to be the composer, not only of bawdy songs, but of tunes which were sung or played among the common folk to the great scandal of the ministers of religion.

The Devil, as I have said, entered fully into the spirit of everything. He piped or he led the ring of dancers, and his 'officer' brought up the rear, 'skelping' those who were too slow. According to Law's *Memorialls*, a certain warlock-minister used to make this his duty. In the excitement witches evidently flung fear to the winds. At any rate Isobel Cockie, at Aberdeen, forgot herself and, in her charge, we read that 'because the Devil played not so melodiously and well as thow crewit, thou took his instrument out of his mouth, and then took him on the chaps therewith, and played thereon to the whole company.'

His Satanic Majesty, it is clear, sometimes put aside his dignity in these merry-makings. There is something really amiable about a devil with a sense of fun, a devil as a dog with his tail going 'ey wig wag wig wag,' and so on. We are reminded, indeed, of the 'Deil' of Burns's Address, that essentially rustic figure, comic almost in his rages, not at all the sublime figure of Miltonic imagination, 'the Chief of many thronèd Powers, That led th' embattled Seraphim to war'; but

'Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick or Clootie
Wha in yon cavern grim and sootie
Closed under hatches
Spairges about the brunstane cootie
To scaud poor wretches.'

But though Burns could not take seriously the Devil of the Scottish peasantry, his witches found him a hard enough Master at times. His rages could be terrible. When he convened his folk he demanded of them what evil they had been up to since the last meeting. Those who had been criminally busy were praised, but woe betide backsliders from wickedness! And of course pious sentiments were abhorrent to his Majesty. When he was enquiring from the sorcerers at North Berwick how they were getting on in their scheme against King James, Grey Meill, 'ane auld sely pure plowman,' who kept the door for them, observed that 'nathing ailit the King yet, God be thankit.' At which the Devil bounded out of the pulpit and belaboured him. The Auldearn Devil would not tolerate his women-folk gossiping behind his back, as they did, and calling him 'Black

Johne'. He would thrash the whole coven for it, growling, 'I ken weill aneughe what ze wer sayeing of me!'

Sometimes under the Devil's direction witches would open new graves and hack off pieces of the corpses with their 'gullies'. These pieces came in useful for charms, as ingredients of hell-broths, to tie round christened cats that were used for brewing storms, etc. At earlier times the Devil had been architect and engineer. Various noble bridges, castles and walls of the Middle Ages claim him as their erector; but in Scotland in the witch-age his ambitions ran to destruction alone. Thus he set a coven to work at Cortaquhie to destroy the bridge. It was a hard task. One Helen Guthrie confessed later that 'Shee herselfe, Jonnet Stout and others of them did thrust their shoulderis againest the bridge,' and Isobel Smyth, another witch, said, 'We all rewed that meitting, for wee hurt ourselves lifting.' Picture the scene, the old Scots witch-wives heaving and straining away at the bridge in the darkness amidst a terrific storm of thunder and rain, and the Devil as a foreman bustling about telling them where and when to apply their frail strength.

The poor Devil has worn some degraded forms and carried some common names. In Scots folklore and literature it is vain to expect the majestic figure portrayed by Milton or the author of the Book of Job, or even the colossal horror visualised by Dante waist-deep in the ice of Inferno. Only great and independent minds can do justice to the idea of the fallen Seraph. The devil of the peasantry is the devil of Gothic Art, a figure grotesque, horrible, obscene, zoomorphic, never terrible, never a worthy adversary of God. Even the

finest devils of mediaeval Art, those carved in the tympana of the doorways of French cathedrals like Bourges, are deformed to contrast with the severe pure beauty of the Angels of light. Their faces are distorted images of lust and ferocity. They have evil additional faces beneath their tails and upon their bellies. The Church had so long insisted upon representations of Hell and its demons, and the imagers had for so long loved to expend their talent for the grotesque in corbels and capitals, choir-stalls and other carved work, that it is no wonder that the idea of the Devil had penetrated the minds of all, and, even in Protestant lands like Scotland, long survived the Reformation and the end of the Gothic tradition.

Perhaps the most persistent tradition in Scotland of the Devil's appearance was that of a black man. Usually he is described merely as black, sometimes as huge and hairy and grim, and occasionally as clad in black clothes. And if his colour was not enough to apprise a man that he had seen the Accuser of the Brethren, the cloven feet were there as a sign of his dignity. The Devil at North Berwick and at Auldearn was a fearful black fellow, and as a black man he once interrupted a field-meeting of Covenanters beside a river. He made as if to cross the river in the full gaze of the assembly, and then in midstream cunningly simulated drowning and shouted for help. Whereupon the Covenanters threw him ropes and heaved together to pull him to safety. But the black man steadily prevailed, and soon he would have dragged them all into the river and drowned them, had not the pastor seen through his wicked stratagem and cried, 'It is the Devil. Quit the rope and let him go'; and so they quit the rope and were saved.

As black man, towsy tyke, or respectable greybeard, in any one of a hundred guises, the Devil was incessantly vigilant, 'going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.' It is no wonder that he has given his name to so many places in the Scottish countryside, to so many sinister rocks, precipices, gullies, corners, pools, etc. Indeed, to a greater extent, perhaps, than in any other European country, the Devil seems at home in Scotland. So great a national character could hardly go uncelebrated in Scots literature, and the three short stories and the poem included in this volume are all masterpieces of the macabre that could only have come out of Scotland. In each of these consummate artistic form has been given to the old themes of 'diablerie', and their merits have too often been acknowledged to require mention here.

* * * * *

Tam o' Shanter, composed entirely in one day, was a sheer inspiration, and Burns's favourite among his own poems. It has of course been illustrated a hundred times, but nearly if not always in a careful, grey, sober-sided way that is not true to the spirit of the text. The artists, too conscious of their public, have perhaps lacked the courage to be crude. But a Dance of Witches is not a respectable gathering and Burns was certainly not mealy-mouthed. He had far more in common with Dunbar and the old Scots 'makars' than with the poets of his own and later times. He had their passion for richness and profusion of language. He gloried as they did in spates of words. He had their gusto, their frankness, their unabashed coarseness when the subject was such as demanded it.

Tam was a drunken churl who nearly lost his life through excitement at seeing a hefty wench in a very short shift bounding about in a dance of witches. The moral of the poem is, beware of drink and letting the mind dwell upon cutty sarks and what they do not conceal. The illustrators of Burns seem to have been determined not to be guilty of the coarseness of their author. Their sarks are not cutty.

The perfect pictorial counterpart of a story is naturally most likely to come from a contemporary of the author. But Burns was illustrated a generation or two after *Tam o' Shanter* appeared and never by a kindred spirit. He should have had as the illustrator some Scottish Rowlandson, some designer with a large, careless *joie-de-vivre*, a beefy uproarious satisfaction in the physical side of living; but his scenes have been for the most part represented in tidy grey engravings after pictures by genre or landscape painters with little gusto and small sense of the fantastic, who worked for a public sentimental about the slightly affected Burns of the *Cottar's Saturday Night*, but doubtful about the natural

Burns of *The Jolly Beggars*, *Tam o' Shanter* and other such explosions of sheer high spirits, animal health and rustic frankness.

Sir Walter Scott probably never wrote any passage of higher imaginative effect than that description of the wicked men who sat at the table of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, the men that shed the blood of the Saints. 'There was the fierce Middleton and the dissolute Rothes and the crafty Lauderdale, and Dalyell with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall with Cameron's blude on his hands; and wild Bonshaw that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy Advocate MacKenyie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse as beautiful as when he lived, with his long dark curled locks streaming down over his laced buff-coat and his left hand always on his right spule-blade to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made.'

An unforgettable picture, as thrilling as anything in romantic fiction, and constructed entirely of concrete facts. Indeed, in Scott's method of writing it mattered everything to his purpose that his characters should as far as possible have been actual historical personages. Scott, of course, was a man with a prodigious memory and a passion for history, who happened to write fiction. He loved to add historical footnotes to his works, and, one imagines, he might have welcomed an offer, had one been forthcoming, to annotate fully his own novels under another name, 'so that a neat rivulet of text might

meander through a meadow of margin.' His highest imaginative flights depend for their value upon a body of concrete facts.

So completely authentic is a passage like the one quoted that it seems not fiction but History itself—History as an Art at its highest. And one even begins to wonder why certain famous persecutors of the Covenanters were not included. Where, I have always asked myself, is Bloody Lagg? Perhaps Grierson of Lagg was the model for Sir Robert Redgauntlet himself.

If you read the old books which glorify the men of the Covenant, you keep on encountering the sources of the highly significant details with which the imaginative effect of *Wandering Willie's Tale* is heightened. The Cameronians were convinced that their enemies were in league with the Devil. Bishops cast no shadows, were not reflected in mirrors; and had cloven feet. Black men were seen familiar with them. Archbishop Sharp was proof against lead; but steel prevailed. Even then the warlock died desperately hard. The avengers of 'Christ's Crown and Covenant' had to hack and hack at him again. All sorts of devilish charms (the fanatical believed) were found upon his person. When his tobacco box was opened, out flew his familiar spirit as a humble bee. The old Laird of Redgauntlet had a 'direct compact with Satan,' and they said 'that he was proof against steel; and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstanes from a hearth; that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gawns.' And so the Covenanters said of Claverhouse, Dalyell and other persecutors.

To illustrate the diabolical vindictiveness which the

Cameronians felt against their opponents, I have selected a few sentences from the supplement to Howie's *Scots Worthies*. Howie wrote of the beautiful lives of the men and women of the Covenant, and, in a ferocious appendix, 'The Judgment and Justice of God exemplified,' some other hand gave the 'wicked lives and miserable deaths of some of the most remarkable Apostates and bloody Persecutors.'

Of the men whom Piper Steenie saw at Redgauntlet's table in Hell the 'Judgment' does not include Earlshall and Douglas, perhaps because in their deaths even to the most morbid fancy 'the just and terrible vengeance of God was not discernible.' I give the fates of the others who were present.

Middleton: 'He lived but a short and contemptuous life there, till the justice and judgment of God overtook him; for falling down a stair, he broke the bone of his right arm; at the next tumble the broken splinter pierced his side; after which he soon became stupid and died in great torment.'

Rothes: 'Rothes was seized with sickness and a dreadful horror of conscience. . . . And so roaring out, till he made the bed shake under him, he died in that condition.'

Lauderdale: 'By old age and vast bulk of body his spirits became quite sunk, till his heart was not the bigness of a walnut; and so at last upon the chamber-box, like another Arius, he evacuated soul, vital life and excrements all at once, and so went to his own place.'

Dalyell: 'that same day, August 22nd, when at his beloved exercise, drinking wine, while the cup was at his head, he fell down (being in perfect health) and expired.'

Bonshaw: 'At the very place where he had bound Mr. Cargill one of his drunken companions and he falling at odds, while he was easing himself on a dunghill, his comrade, coming out with a sword, ran him through the body till the blood and the excrements came out, his last words were—"God damn my soul eternally, for I am gone." '

Bluidy MacKenyie: 'After the persecuting work was over, he went up to London, where he died with all the passages of his body running blood. Physicians being brought could give no natural cause for it, but that it was the hand of God on him for the blood he had shed on his own land.'

Claverhouse: 'It has been said for certain that his own waiting-servant taking a resolution to rid the world of this truculent bloody monster, and knowing he had proof of lead, shot him with a silver bullet he had before taken off his own coat for that purpose.'

Scott as a novelist had no need to strain his powers of invention. His phenomenal memory and extensive reading provided him with an endless succession of facts which his creative imagination analysed, sifted and coordinated as parts of a new artistic synthesis. The horseshoe frown of the Lairds of Redgauntlet was no invention of his. It was derived from the account of the confessions of Jean Weir, sister of the old warlock, Major Weir, who was burned at Edinburgh in 1670. The wretched old woman said that their mother had been a witch, and, whenever a mark appeared upon her brow she had known their most distant secrets. Upon being asked what sort of mark it was, 'she put back her head-dress, and, seeming to frown, there was an exact horseshoe, shaped for nails, in her wrinkles.'

Even the story of the cup of blood, the last drink of the damned Laird of Redgauntlet, has its parallel in the account of another persecutor, Sir Robert Laurie of Maxwelton, who having recently caused the murder of a Saint, at his own daughter's wedding a cup of wine put into his hand turned into congealed blood.

In *Thrawn Janet* and *Tod Lapraik* Stevenson undoubtedly took *Wandering Willie's Tale* as his model. Stevenson has been accused of imitating Scott instead of following the true bent of his own fantastic genius; but in these two stories, if he follows Scott, he is none the less true to himself, and he never wrote anything finer. He, too, like all Scotsmen, was conversant from birth with stories of the Devil and of the Covenanters, legends galore of witchcraft and second sight, set among the gaunt moors and by the sides of the fierce burns, which through the centuries have bitten themselves deep into Scottish rock and soil like acid into a plate. Nothing could be more natural than, with two such masterpieces as *Tam o' Shanter* and *Wandering Willie* before him, that he should try his hand at other stories of diablerie. And how wisely he chose the vernacular from the mouths of lowland peasants as his literary speech, for Lowland Scots is not only a beautiful but an extremely rich and expressive tongue, with a tang of the earth in it, a quality of music which cannot be translated.

Appropriately, he chose the name Balweary for the parish of the Rev. Mungo Foulis in *Thrawn Janet*. The sound seemed right to him, and Balweary, being the lairdship of the wizard Michael Scott, is clouded with

associations. But did Stevenson forget, when he called the warlock of the Bass Tod Lapraik, that Sir Walter had already used the name in *Wandering Willie's Tale*? At any rate, I have always chosen to consider it as one of the many tributes the later author paid to his great, profuse predecessor.

Janet was a natural choice for the name of a Scottish witch. Dunbar had mentioned 'Jonet the widow on ane besome rydand' along with Symon Magus, Merlin, Mahomet and other famous sorcerers, and the annals of Scottish witchcraft abound in mentions of Janets, Jonnets and the like. Jane, Jean, Joan, Jeanne, Janet, Jennet, Jonnet, etc., all are variations of one name, and Miss M. A. Murray in her *Witch-cult in Western Europe* shows that it is by far the most common of names for witch-wives.

That the Devil should be revenged on Janet for renouncing him before the Reverend Mungo and should choose such a hair-raising method is quite in accordance with the habit of Scottish devils. There are several cases recorded of warlocks awaiting execution in their cells, who were found with their necks 'thrawn', hanging by the thinnest of tapes, and with other circumstances that demonstrated beyond a doubt that the Devil had done the deed, either to preclude all possible confessions from the victim or to punish him for confessions or renunciations already made.

But it is not by grisly details that Stevenson achieved his great effect of mirkiness in *Thrawn Janet*. It is chiefly by the brief but marvellous suggestions of atmosphere and landscape—the manse deep in the trees by the burn-side under the Hanging Shaw, the moors

around, and the intolerable breathless heat that oppressed men and bestial alike.

The tale of *Tod Lapraik* was probably first suggested by the account of Alexander Peden's captivity in the Bass, as given in John Howie of Lochgoin's *Scots Worthies*. There are told the stories of Peden and the lass, and of the soldier who at the words of the prophet received such a deep conviction of guilt that he flung down his arms; and eventually had to be set ashore, where he settled down and 'became a singular Christian.'

The gift of prophetic vision or 'second sight' was common among the Covenanters, but Peden had it to a greater degree than any other. There was scarcely an incident of his hunted life that he did not foresee, and few of the godless who crossed his path escaped without a prophecy of woe to come that did not fail to be most bitterly fulfilled. Of the Cameronian Saints none had a more vitriolic tongue. Second sight must have been an unenviable gift. In Scottish story the picture of the future is almost invariably baleful. The seers witness only the bonny bride in her winding sheet, the bridegroom's horse stumbling at the ford, the worms 'channering' in the mould.

It is recorded that certain Scots witches awaiting trial slept so soundly that nothing could awaken them. They had been in all probability thoroughly exhausted by the method then in use of inducing confession by 'walking' prisoners to and fro for hours; but suspicion against them was deepened. It was doubtless held that they were in that kind of trance wherein the body of a sorcerer can be asleep at one place while his spirit is actively engaged at another. Thus Tod Lapraik in the story was

working his loom in a trance at North Berwick while at the same time he was dancing rapturously on the Bass, and thus, when the silver bullet struck 'the appearance' on the island, the body fell dead on the mainland. The werwolf superstition survived till late into the eighteenth century in Scotland, where, in the Highlands, stories found credit of witches and warlocks who adopted animal shapes (as Tod did that of a solan) in pursuance of evil schemes.

These stories have all a similar character to that of the traveller attacked by a ferocious wolf, who beat it off and severed a paw. Arriving at last at his destination he told his host the story, and, lo, in the room adjoining lay the wife of the host concealing in the bed-linen her amputated hand.

TAM O' SHANTER

BY

ROBERT BURNS

TAM O' SHANTER

A TALE

Of Brownyis and of Bogilis full in this Buke.

GAWIN DOUGLAS

WHEN CHAPMAN BILLIES LEAVE THE STREET,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.
   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 bonnie lasses.)
   O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou wast a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was na sober;

That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirton Jean till Monday.
She prophesy'd that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.
   Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how monie counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!
   But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;

They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter;
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy:
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed,
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or 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 taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling 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 business 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;
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—
  By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.—

Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.—
Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, 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 new frae France,

But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' 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 rafters a' did dirl.—
Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantraip slight
Each in its cauld hand held a light,—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae the rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwooddie hags wad spean a foal,
Lowping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie,
There was ae winsome wench and walie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kend on Carrick shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear,)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.—

Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!
But here my muse her wing maun cour;
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 ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even 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-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark:
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.
As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,

When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,

When, 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' monie an eldritch skreech and hollow.
  Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig:
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they darena cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—

Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.
  Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed;
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE

FROM SCOTT'S 'REDGAUNTLET'

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE

YE MAUN HAVE HEARD OF SIR ROBERT Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet? He was knighted at Lonon court, wi' the King's ain sword; and being a redhot prelatist, he came down here, rampauging like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy, (and of lunacy, for what I ken,) to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye for the strong hand; and his name is kend as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor cave, could hide the puir hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth when they fand them, they didna mak muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck—It was just, 'Will ye tak the test?'—if not, 'Make ready—present —fire!'—and there lay the recusant.

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan—that he

was proof against steel—and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstanes from a hearth—that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gawns—and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was, 'Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet!' He wasna a bad maister to his ain folk though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs caa'd those killing times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at ony time.

Now you are to ken that my gudesire lived on Redgauntlet's grund—they ca' the place Primrose Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding days, and lang before. It was a pleasant bit; and I think the air is callerer and fresher there than ony where else in the country. It's a' deserted now; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna see the plight the place was in; but that's a' wide o' the mark. There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, a rambling, rattling chiel he had been

in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at 'Hoopers and Girders'—a' Cumberland couldna touch him at 'Jockie Lattin'—and he had the finest finger for the backlilt between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belang to some side or other. He had nae ill-will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hosting, watching and warding, he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some, that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kend a' the folks about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and aye gae my gudesire his gude word wi' the Laird; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution, and it had like to have broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegether sae great as they feared, and other folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawing what they wad do with their auld enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower mony great folks dipped in the same doings, to mak a spick and span new warld. So parliament passed it a' ower easy; and Sir Robert, bating that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. His revel was as loud, and

his hall as weel lighted, as ever it had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the non-conformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behoved to be prompt to the rent-day, or else the Laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body, that naebody cared to anger him; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on, made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came, there was a summons from the grund-officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behoved to flit. Sair wark he had to get the siller; but he was weel-freended, and at last he got the haill scraped thegether—a thousand merks—the maist of it was from a neighbour they caa'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod. Laurie had walth o' gear—could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare—and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution warld, but he liked an orra sough of this warld, and a tune on the pipes weel aneugh at a bytime, and abune a', he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose Knowe.

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle, wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the Laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the Castle was, that Sir Robert had fretted himself into a fit

of the gout, because he did not appear before twelve o'clock. It wasna a'thegether for sake of the money, Dougal thought; but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour, and there sat the Laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great, ill-favoured jackanape, that was a special pet of his; a cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played—ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill Castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching and biting folk, especially before ill weather, or disturbances in the state. Sir Robert caa'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt; and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in his mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himself in the room wi' naebody but the Laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the Major, a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great armed chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red laced coat, and the Laird's wig on his head; and aye as Sir Robert girned wi' pain, the jackanape girned too, like a sheep's-head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faured, fearsome couple they were. The Laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach; for he keepit up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready, and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horseback, and away after ony of

the hill-folk he could get speerings of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna gien to fear ony thing. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him; and a book of sculduddry sangs was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the Goodman of Primrose Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties. Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look, as if he would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows, that men saw the visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-dinted, as if it had been stamped there.

'Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle?' said Sir Robert. 'Zounds! if you are'——

My gudesire, with as gude a countenance as he could put on, made a leg, and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The Laird drew it to him hastily—'Is it all here, Steenie, man?'

'Your honour will find it right,' said my gudesire.

'Here, Dougal,' said the Laird, 'gie Steenie a tass of brandy down stairs, till I count the siller and write the receipt.'

But they werena weel out of the room, when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd the Castle rock! Back ran Dougal—in flew the livery-men—yell on yell gied the Laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdy-girdie—naebody to say 'come in,' or 'gae out.' Terribly the Laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat; and hell, hell, hell, and its flames, was aye the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swoln feet into the tub, he cried out it was burning; and folk say that it *did* bubble and sparkle like a seething caldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head, and said he had given him blood instead of burgundy; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet the neist day. The jackanape they caa'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master; my gudesire's head was like to turn—he forgot baith siller and receipt, and down stairs he banged; but as he ran, the shrieks came faint and fainter; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the Castle that the Laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire, wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was, that Dougal had seen the money-bag, and heard the Laird speak of writing the receipt. The young Laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh, to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never gree'd weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterwards sat in the last Scots Parliament

and voted for the Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations—if his father could have come out of his grave, he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough Knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat nor graned, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now, Dougal looked aye waur and waur when night was coming, and was aye the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais, whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they caa'd it, weel-a-day! The night before the funeral, Dougal could keep his awn counsel nae langer; he came doun with his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took ae tass of brandy to himsell, and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himsell, he wasna lang for this world; for that, every night since Sir Robert's death, his silver call had sounded from the state chamber, just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime, to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said, that being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower, (for naebody cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse,) he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty; for, 'though death breaks service,' said MacCallum, 'it shall never break my service to Sir Robert; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon.'

Hutcheon had nae will to the wark, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch; so down the carles sat ower a stoup of brandy, and Hutcheon, who was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible; but Dougal would hear naething but a blaud of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure aneugh the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it, and up gat the twa auld serving-men, and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance; for there were torches in the room, which showed him the foul fiend in his ain shape, sitting on the Laird's coffin! Over he cowped as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himself, he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer, raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gaen anes and aye; but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartizan, and amang the auld chimneys and turrets, where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogle-wark.

But when a' was ower, and the Laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood against him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the Castle, to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John, sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat, and a small walking

rapier by his side, instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundred-weight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communing so often tauld ower, that I almost think I was there my-sell, though I couldna be born at the time. (In fact, Alan, my companion mimicked, with a good deal of humour, the flattering, conciliating tone of the tenant's address, and the hypocritical melancholy of the Laird's reply. His grandfather, he said, had, while he spoke, his eye fixed on the rental-book, as if it were a mastiff-dog that he was afraid would spring up and bite him.)

'I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat, and the white loaf, and the braid lairdship. Your father was a kind man to friends and followers; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils when he had the gout.'

'Ay, Steenie,' quoth the Laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, 'his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country; no time to set his house in order—weel prepared Godward, no doubt, which is

the root of the matter—but left us behind a tangled hesp to wind, Steenie.—Hem! hem! We maun go to business, Steenie; much to do, and little time to do it in.'

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday-book—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging tenants.

'Stephen,' said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of voice—'Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand—due at last term.'

Stephen. 'Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father.'

Sir John. 'Ye took a receipt then, doubtless, Stephen; and can produce it?'

Stephen. 'Indeed I hadna time, an it like your honour; for nae sooner had I set doun the siller, and just as his honour Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it, and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him.'

'That was unlucky,' said Sir John, after a pause. 'But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody. I want but a *talis qualis* evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man.'

Stephen. 'Troth, Sir John, there was naebody in the room but Dougal MacCallum, the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master.'

'Very unlucky again, Stephen,' said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. 'The man to whom ye paid the money is dead—and the man who witnessed the payment is dead too—and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this?'

Stephen. 'I dinna ken, your honour; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins; for, God help me! I had to borrow out of twenty purses; and I am sure that ilka man there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money.'

Sir John. 'I have little doubt ye *borrowed* the money, Steenie. It is the *payment* to my father that I want to have some proof of.'

Stephen. 'The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have ta'en it wi' him, maybe some of the family may have seen it.'

Sir John. 'We will examine the servants, Stephen; that is but reasonable.'

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that they had ever seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room, and then said to my gudesire, 'Now, Steenie, ye see you have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than ony other body, I beg, in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie; for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit.'

'The Lord forgie your opinion,' said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end—'I am an honest man.'

'So am I, Stephen,' said his honour; 'and so are all the folks in the house, I hope. But if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove.' He paused, and then added, mair sternly, 'If I

understand your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character, by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding.—Where do you suppose this money to be?—I insist upon knowing.'

My gudesire saw every thing look sae muckle against him that he grew nearly desperate—however, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

'Speak out, sirrah,' said the Laird, assuming a look of his father's, a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry—it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow;—'Speak out, sir! I *will* know your thoughts;—do you suppose that I have this money?'

'Far be it frae me to say so,' said Stephen.

'Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?'

'I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent,' said my gudesire; 'and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof.'

'Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story,' said Sir John; 'I ask where you think it is—and demand a correct answer?'

'In hell, if you *will* have my thoughts of it,' said my gudesire, driven to extremity,—'in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle.'

Down the stairs he ran, (for the parlour was nae place for him after such a word,) and he heard the Laird

swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor, (him they caa'd Laurie Lapraik,) to try if he could make ony thing out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the warst word in his wame—thief, beggar, and dyvour, were the saftest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms, Laurie brought up the auld story of his dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the Laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Redgauntlet. My gudesire was, by this time, far beyond the bounds of patience, and while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folk's flesh grue that heard them;—he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say.—I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell.—At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common a little lonely change-house, that was keepit then by an ostler-wife, they suld hae caa'd her Tibbie Faw, and there puir Steenie cried for a mutchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite of meat, but he couldna think o't, nor would he take his foot out of the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholly at twa draughts, and named a toast at each:—the first was, the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and might he

never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was, a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller, or tell him what came o't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld.

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when, all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring, and flee, and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle—Upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, 'That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?'—So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling trot. 'But his spunk's soon out of him, I think,' continued the stranger, 'and that is like mony a man's courage, that thinks he wad do great things till he come to the proof.'

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with 'Gude e'en to you, freend.'

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was aye beside him at the selfsame pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry, and, to say the truth, half feared.

'What is it that ye want with me, freend?' he said. 'If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell.'

'If you will tell me your grief,' said the stranger, 'I

am one that, though I have been sair miscaa'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends.'

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart, mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

'It's a hard pinch,' said the stranger; 'but I think I can help you.'

'If you could lend the money, sir, and take a lang day—I ken nae other help on earth,' said my gudesire.

'But there may be some under the earth,' said the stranger. 'Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now, I can tell you, that your auld Laird is disturbed in his grave by your curses, and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him, he will give you the receipt.'

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humorsome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides, he was bauld wi' brandy, and desperate wi' distress; and he said, he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt.—The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer court-yard, through the muckle faulding yetts, and aneath the auld portcullis; and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be in Sir Robert's house at

Pace and Yule, and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning, when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

'God!' said my gudesire, 'if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!'

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal MacCallum,—just after his wont, too,—came to open the door, and said, 'Piper Steenie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you.'

My gudesire was like a man in a dream—he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, 'Ha! Dougal Driveower, are ye living? I thought ye had been dead.'

'Never fash yoursell wi' me,' said Dougal, 'but look to yoursell; and see ye tak naething frae ony body here, neither meat, drink, or siller, except just the receipt that is your ain.'

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kend to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling of red wine, and speaking blasphemy and sculduddry, as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blithest.

But, Lord take us in keeping! what a set of ghastly revellers they were that sat round that table!—My gudesire kend mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell, with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall,

with Cameron's blude on his hand; and wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy Advocate MacKenyie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks, streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed, and sung, and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time; and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made my gudesire's very nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of the Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the

Bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattle-bag; and the wicked guardsmen, in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites, that shed blood like water; and many a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich, and making them wickeder than they would be; grinding the poor to powder, when the rich had broken them to fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a' this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper to come to the board-head where he was sitting; his legs stretched out before him, and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broad-sword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth—the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itsell was not there—it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say as he came forward, 'Is not the Major come yet?' And another answered, 'The jackanape will be here betimes the morn.' And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, 'Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?'

With much ado my father gat breath to say that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

'Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie,' said the appearance of Sir Robert—'Play us up, "Weel hoddled, Luckie." '

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a war-lock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings; and my gudesire had sometimes played

it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

'MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub,' said the fearfu' Sir Robert, 'bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him!'

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles. But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter was of steel, and heated to a white heat; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said he was faint and frightened, and had not wind aneugh to fill the bag.

'Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie,' said the figure; 'for we do little else here; and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting.'

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the King's messenger in hand while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie at the Threave Castle, and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink, or make minstrelsy; but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it; and he was so stout-hearted by this time, that he charged Sir Robert for conscience-sake—(he had no power to say the holy name)—and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocketbook the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. 'There is your receipt, ye pitiful cur; and for

the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle.'

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire, when Sir Robert roared aloud, 'Stop, though, thou sack-doudling son of a whore! I am not done with thee. HERE we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth, to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection.'

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenty, and he said aloud, 'I refer mysell to God's pleasure, and not to yours.'

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him; and he sunk on the earth with such a sudden shock, that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there he could not tell; but when he came to himsell, he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine, just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on grass and gravestane around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld Laird; only the last letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through the mist to Redgauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the Laird.

'Well, you dyvour bankrupt,' was the first word, 'have you brought me my rent?'

'No,' answered my gudesire, 'I have not; but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it.'

'How, sirrah?—Sir Robert's receipt!—You told me he had not given you one.'

'Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?'

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention; and at last, at the date, which my gudesire had not observed,—'*From my appointed place*,' he read, '*this twenty-fifth of November*.'—'What!—That is yesterday!—Villain, thou must have gone to hell for this!'

'I got it from your honour's father—whether he be in heaven or hell, I know not,' said Steenie.

'I will delate you for a warlock to the Privy Council!' said Sir John. 'I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!'

'I intend to delate mysell to the Presbytery,' said Steenie, 'and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel man like me.'

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it him from

point to point, as I have told it you—word for word, neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly, 'Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making, to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a red-hot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers with a redhot chanter. But yet it may be true, Steenie; and if the money cast up, I shall not know what to think of it.—But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle.'

'We were best ask Hutcheon,' said my gudesire; 'he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name.'

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them, that a ruinous turret, lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, and far above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

'There will I go immediately,' said Sir John; and he took (with what purpose, Heaven kens) one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and entered at the turret door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist

dang him back ower—bang gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch. A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is found, and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra things besides, that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had riped the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand, and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word, and that he would hereafter be a good master to him, to make amends.

'And now, Steenie,' said Sir John, 'although this vision of yours tends, on the whole, to my father's credit, as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions upon it, concerning his soul's health. So, I think, we had better lay the haill dirdum on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had taken ower muckle brandy to be very certain about ony thing; and, Steenie, this receipt,' (his hand shook while he held it out,)—'it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire.'

'Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent,' said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

'I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand,' said Sir John,' and that on the spot. And, Steenie, if you

can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this term downward, at an easier rent.'

'Mony thanks to your honour,' said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; 'doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of soumons of appointment whilk your honour's father'——

'Do not call the phantom my father!' said Sir John, interrupting him.

'Weel, then, the thing that was so like him,'—said my gudesire; 'he spoke of my coming back to him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience.'

'Aweel, then,' said Sir John, 'if you be so much distressed in mind, you may speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me.'

Wi' that my gudesire readily agreed that the receipt should be burnt, and the Laird threw it into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum, wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.

My gudesire gaed down to the manse, and the minister, when he had heard the story, said it was his real opinion that though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with dangerous matters, yet, as he had refused the devil's arles, (for such was the offer of meat and drink,) and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped that, if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his

ain accord, lang forswore baith the pipes and the brandy—it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day passed, that he would so much as take the fiddle, or drink usquebaugh or tippenny.

Sir John made up his story about the jackanape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap, that it was nane o' the Auld Enemy that Dougal and my gudesire saw in the Laird's room, but only that wanchancy creature, the Major, capering on the coffin; and that as to the blawing on the Laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the Laird himsell, if no better. But Heaven kens the truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife, after Sir John and her ain gudeman were baith in the moulds. And then, my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgment or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his freends, for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock.

THRAWN JANET

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THRAWN JANET

THE REVEREND MURDOCH SOULIS WAS long minister of the moorland parish of Balweary, in the vale of Dule. A severe, bleak-faced old man, dreadful to his hearers, he dwelt in the last years of his life, without relative or servant or any human company, in the small and lonely manse under the Hanging Shaw. In spite of the iron composure of his features, his eye was wild, scared, and uncertain; and when he dwelt, in private admonitions, on the future of the impenitent, it seemed as if his eye pierced through the storms of time to the terrors of eternity. Many young persons, coming to prepare themselves against the season of the Holy Communion, were dreadfully affected by his talk. He had a sermon on 1st Peter, v. and 8th, 'The devil as a roaring lion,' on the Sunday after every seventeenth of August, and he was accustomed to surpass himself upon that text both by the appalling nature of the matter and the terror of his bearing in the pulpit. The children were frightened into fits, and the old looked more than usually oracular, and were, all that day, full of those hints that Hamlet deprecated. The manse itself, where it stood by the water of Dule among some thick trees, with the Shaw overhanging it on the one side, and on the other many cold, moorish hill-tops rising toward the sky, had begun, at a very early period of Mr. Soulis's ministry, to be avoided in the dusk hours by all who valued themselves upon their prudence; and guidmen

sitting at the clachan alehouse shook their heads together at the thought of passing late by that uncanny neighbourhood. There was one spot, to be more particular, which was regarded with especial awe. The manse stood between the highroad and the water of Dule, with a gable to each; its back was towards the kirktown of Balweary, nearly half a mile away; in front of it, a bare garden, hedged with thorn, occupied the land between the river and the road. The house was two stories high, with two large rooms on each. It opened not directly on the garden, but on a causewayed path, or passage, giving on the road on the one hand, and closed on the other by the tall willows and elders that bordered on the stream. And it was this strip of causeway that enjoyed among the young parishioners of Balweary so infamous a reputation. The minister walked there often after dark, sometimes groaning aloud in the instancy of his unspoken prayers; and when he was from home, and the manse door was locked, the more daring schoolboys ventured, with beating hearts, to 'follow my leader' across that legendary spot.

This atmosphere of terror, surrounding, as it did, a man of God of spotless character and orthodoxy, was a common cause of wonder and subject of inquiry among the few strangers who were led by chance or business into that unknown, outlying country. But many even of the people of the parish were ignorant of the strange events which had marked the first year of Mr. Soulis's ministrations; and among those who were better informed, some were naturally reticent, and others shy of that particular topic. Now and again, only, one of the older folk would warm into courage over his third tumbler, and recount the cause of the minister's strange looks and solitary life.

Fifty years syne, when Mr. Soulis cam' first into Ba'weary, he was still a young man—a callant, the folk said—fu' o' book-learnin' an' grand at the exposition, but, as was natural in sae young a man, wi' nae leevin' experience in religion. The younger sort were greatly taken wi' his gifts and his gab; but auld, concerned, serious men and women were moved even to prayer for the young man, whom they took to be a self-deceiver, and the parish that was like to be sae ill-supplied. It was before the days o' the moderates —weary fa' them; but ill things are like guid—they baith come bit by bit, a pickle at a time; and there were folk even then that said the Lord had left the college professors to their ain devices, an' the lads that went to study wi' them wad hae done mair an' better sittin' in a peat-bog, like their forebears of the persecution, wi' a Bible under their oxter an' a speerit o' prayer in their heart. There was nae doubt onyway, but that Mr.

Soulis had been ower lang at the college. He was careful and troubled for mony things besides the ae thing needful. He had a feck o' books wi' him—mair than had ever been seen before in a' that presbytery; and a sair wark the carrier had wi' them, for they were a' like to have smoored in the De'il's Hag between this and Kilmackerlie. They were books o' divinity, to be sure, or so they ca'd them; but the serious were o' opinion there was little service for sae mony, when the hail o' God's Word would gang in the neuk o' a plaid. Then he wad sit half the day and half the nicht forbye, which was scant decent—writin', nae less; an' first they were feared he wad read his sermons; an' syne it proved he was writin' a book himsel', which was surely no' fittin' for ane o' his years an' sma' experience.

Onyway it behoved him to get an auld, decent wife to keep the manse for him an' see to his bit denners; an' he was recommended to an auld limmer—Janet M'Clour, they ca'd her—an' sae far left to himsel' as to be ower persuaded. There was mony advised him to the contrar, for Janet was mair than suspeckit by the best folk in

Ba'weary. Lang or that, she had had a wean to a dragoon; she hadna come forrit for maybe thretty year; and bairns had seen her mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', whilk was an unco time an' place for a God-fearin' woman. Howsoever, it was the laird himsel' that had first tauld the minister o' Janet; an' in thae days he wad hae gane a far gate to pleesure the laird. When folk tauld him that Janet was sib to the de'il, it was a' superstition by his way of it; an' when they cast up the Bible to him an' the witch of Endor, he wad threep it doun their thrapples that thir days were a' gane by, an' the de'il was mercifully restrained.

Weel, when it got about the clachan that Janet M'Clour was to be servant at the manse, the folk were fair mad wi' her an' him thegither; an' some o' the guidwives had nae better to dae than get round her doorcheeks and chairge her wi' a' that was ken't again' her, frae the sodger's bairn to John Tamson's twa kye. She was nae great speaker; folk usually let her gang her ain gate, an' she let them gang theirs, wi' neither Fair-guid-een nor Fair-guid-day; but when she buckled to, she had a tongue to deve the miller. Up she got, an' there wasna an auld story in Ba'weary but she gart somebody lowp for it that day; they couldna say ae thing but she could say twa to it; till, at the hinder end, the guidwives up an' claught haud of her, an' clawed the coats aff her back, and pu'd her doun the clachan to the water o' Dule, to see if she were a witch or no, soom or droun. The carline skirled till ye could hear her at the Hangin' Shaw, an' she focht like ten; there was mony a guidwife bure the mark o' her neist day an' mony a lang day after;

an' just in the hettest o' the collieshangie, wha suld come up (for his sins) but the new minister!

'Women,' said he (an' he had a grand voice), 'I charge you in the Lord's name to let her go.'

Janet ran to him—she was fair wud wi' terror—an' clang to him, an' prayed him, for Christ's sake, save her frae the cummers; an' they, for their pairt, tauld him a' that was ken't, an' maybe mair.

'Woman,' says he to Janet, 'is this true?'

'As the Lord sees me,' says she, 'as the Lord made me, no' a word o't. Forbye the bairn,' says she, 'I've been a decent woman a' my days.'

'Will you,' says Mr. Soulis, 'in the name of God, and before me, His unworthy minister, renounce the devil and his works?'

Weel, it wad appear that when he askit that, she gave a girn that fairly frichtit them that saw her, an' they could hear her teeth play dirl thegither in her chafts; but there was naething for it but the ae way or the ither; an' Janet lifted up her hand an' renounced the de'il before them a'.

'And now,' says Mr. Soulis to the guidwives, 'home with ye, one and all, and pray to God for His forgiveness.'

An' he gied Janet his arm, though she had little on

her but a sark, and took her up the clachan to her ain door like a leddy o' the land; an' her screighin' an' laughin' as was a scandal to be heard.

There were mony grave folk lang ower their prayers that nicht; but when the morn cam' there was sic a fear fell upon a' Ba'weary that the bairns hid theirsels, an' even the men-folk stood an' keekit frae their doors. For there was Janet comin' doun the clachan—her or her likeness, nane could tell—wi' her neck thrawn, an' her heid on ae side, like a body that has been hangit, an' a girn on her face like an unstreakit corp. By an' by they got used wi' it, an' even speered at her to ken what was wrang; but frae that day forth she couldna speak like a Christian woman, but slavered an' played click wi' her teeth like a pair o' shears; an' frae that day forth the name o' God cam' never on her lips. Whiles she wad try to say it, but it michtna be. Them that kenned best said least; but they never gied that Thing the name o' Janet M'Clour; for the auld Janet, by their way o't, was in muckle hell that day. But the minister was neither to haud nor to bind; he preached about naething but the folk's cruelty that had gi'en her a stroke of the palsy; he skelpit the bairns that meddled her; an' he had her up to the manse that same nicht, an' dwalled there a' his lane wi' her under the Hangin' Shaw.

Weel, time gaed by: and the idler sort commenced to think mair lichtly o' that black business. The minister was weel thocht o'; he was aye late at the writing, folk wad see his can'le doon by the Dule water after twal' at e'en; and he seemed pleased wi' himsel' an' upsitten as at first, though a' body could see that he was dwining. As for Janet she cam' an' she gaed; if she didna speak

muckle afore, it was reason she should speak less then; she meddled naebody; but she was an eldritch thing to see, an' nane wad hae mistrysted wi' her for Ba'weary glebe.

About the end o' July there cam' a spell o' weather, the like o't never was in that country-side; it was lown an' het an' heartless; the herds couldna win up the Black Hill, the bairns were ower weariet to play; an' yet it was gousty too, wi' claps o' het wund that rumm'led in the glens, and bits o' shouers that slockened naething. We aye thocht it büt to thun'er on the morn; but the morn cam', an' the morn's morning, an' it was aye the same uncanny weather, sair on folks and bestial. O' a' that were the waur, nane suffered like Mr. Soulis; he could neither sleep nor eat, he tauld his elders; an' when he wasna writin' at his weary book, he wad be stravaguin' ower a' the country-side like a man possessed, when a' body else was blithe to keep caller ben the house.

Abune Hangin' Shaw, in the bield o' the Black Hill, there's a bit enclosed grund wi' an iron yett; an' it seems, in the auld days, that was the kirkyaird o' Ba'weary, an'

consecrated by the Papists before the blessed licht shone upon the kingdom. It was a great howff o' Mr. Soulis's onyway; there he wad sit an' consider his sermons; an' indeed it's a bieldy bit. Weel, as he cam' ower the wast end o' the Black Hill, ae day, he saw first twa, an' syne fower, an' syne seeven corbie craws fleein' round an' round abune the auld kirkyaird. They flew laigh an' heavy, an' squawked to ither as they gaed; an' it was clear to Mr. Soulis that something had put them frae their ordinar. He wasna easy fleyed, an' gaed straucht up to the wa's; an' what suld he find there but a man, or the appearance o' a man, sittin' in the inside upon a grave. He was of a great stature, an' black as hell, and his e'en were singular to see. Mr. Soulis had heard tell o' black men, mony's the time; but there was something unco about this black man that daunted him. Het as he was, he took a kind o' cauld grue in the marrow o' his banes; but up he spak for a' that; an' says he: 'My friend, are you a stranger in this place?' The black man answered never a word; he got upon his feet, an' begude to hirsle to the wa' on the far side; but he aye lookit at the minister; an' the minister stood an' lookit back; till a' in a meenit the black man was ower the wa' an' rinnin' for the bield o' the trees. Mr. Soulis, he hardly kenned why, ran after him; but he was fair forjaskit wi' his walk an' the het, unhalesome weather; an' rin as he likit, he got nae mair than a glisk o' the black man amang the birks, till he won doun to the foot o' the hillside, an' there he saw him ance mair, gaun, hap-step-an'-lawp, ower Dule water to the manse.

Mr. Soulis wasna weel pleased that this fearsome gangrel suld mak' sae free wi' Ba'weary manse; an' he

ran the harder, an', wet shoon, ower the burn, an' up the walk; but the de'il a black man was there to see. He stepped out upon the road, but there was naebody there; he gaed a' ower the gairden, but na, nae black man. At the hinder end, an' a bit feared as was but natural, he lifted the hasp an' into the manse; and there was Janet M'Clour before his e'en, wi' her thrawn craig, an' nane sae pleased to see him. An' he aye minded sinsyne, when first he set his e'en upon her, he had the same cauld and deidly grue.

'Janet,' says he, 'have you seen a black man?'

'A black man!' quo' she. 'Save us a'! Ye're no wise, minister. There's nae black man in a' Ba'weary.'

But she didna speak plain, ye maun understand; but yam-yammered, like a powney wi' the bit in its moo.

'Weel,' says he, 'Janet, if there was nae black man, I have spoken with the Accuser of the Brethren.'

An' he sat doun like ane wi' a fever, an' his teeth chittered in his heid.

'Hoots,' says she, 'think shame to yoursel', minister'; an' gied him a drap brandy that she keept aye by her.

Syne Mr. Soulis gaed into his study amang a' his books. It's a lang, laigh, mirk chalmer, perishin' cauld in winter, an' no' very dry even in the top o' the simmer,

for the manse stands near the burn. Sae doun he sat, and thocht of a' that had come an' gane since he was in Ba'weary, an' his hame, an' the days when he was a bairn an' ran daffin' on the braes; an' that black man aye ran in his heid like the owercome of a sang. Aye the mair he thocht, the mair he thocht o' the black man. He tried the prayer, an' the words wouldna come to him; an' he tried, they say, to write at his book, but he couldna mak' nae mair o' that. There was whiles he thocht the black man was at his oxter, an' the swat stood upon him cauld as well-water; and there was ither whiles, when he cam' to himsel' like a christened bairn an' minded naething.

The upshot was that he gaed to the window an' stood glowrin' at Dule water. The trees are unco thick, an' the water lies deep an' black under the manse; an' there was Janet washin' the cla'es wi' her coats kilted. She had her back to the minister, an' he, for his pairt, hardly kenned what he was lookin' at. Syne she turned round, an' shawed her face; Mr. Soulis had the same cauld grue as twice that day afore, an' it was borne in upon him what folk said, that Janet was deid lang syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh. He drew back a pickle and he scanned her narrowly. She was tramp-trampin' in the cla'es croonin' to hersel'; and eh! Gude guide us, but it was a fearsome face. Whiles she sang louder, but there was nae man born o' woman that could tell the words o' her sang; an' whiles she lookit side-lang doun, but there was naething there for her to look at. There gaed a scunner through the flesh upon his banes; an' that was Heeven's advertisement. But Mr. Soulis just blamed himsel', he said, to think sae ill

o' a puir, auld afflicted wife that hadna a freend forbye himsel'; an' he put up a bit prayer for him an' her, an' drank a little caller water—for his heart rose again' the meat—an' gaed up to his naked bed in the gloamin'.

That was a nicht that has never been forgotten in Ba'weary, the nicht o' the seeventeenth o' August, seeventeen hun'er' an' twal'. It had been het afore, as I hae said, but that nicht it was hetter than ever. The sun gaed doun amang unco-lookin' clouds; it fell as mirk as the pit; no' a star, no' a breath o' wund; ye couldna see your han' afore your face, an' even the auld folk cuist the covers frae their beds an' lay pechin' for their breath. Wi' a' that he had upon his mind, it was gey an' unlikely Mr. Soulis wad get muckle sleep. He lay an' he tummled; the gude, caller bed that he got into brunt his very banes; whiles he slept, an' whiles he waukened; whiles he heard the time o' nicht, an' whiles a tyke yowlin' up the muir, as if somebody was deid; whiles he thocht he heard bogles claverin' in his lug, an' whiles he saw spunkies in the room. He behoved, he judged, to be sick; an' sick he was—little he jaloosed the sickness.

At the hinder end, he got a clearness in his mind, sat up in his sark on the bed-side, an' fell thinkin' ance mair o' the black man an' Janet. He couldna weel tell how—maybe it was the cauld to his feet—but it cam' in upon him wi' a spate that there was some connection between thir twa, an' that either or baith o' them were bogles. An' just at that moment, in Janet's room, which was neist to his, there cam' a stramp o' feet as if men were wars'lin', an' then a loud bang; an' then a wund gaed reishling round the fower quarters o' the house; an' then a' was ance mair as seelent as the grave.

Mr. Soulis was feared for neither man nor deevil. He got his tinder-box, an' lit a can'le, an' made three steps o't ower to Janet's door. It was on the hasp, an' he pushed it open, an' keeked bauldly in. It was a big room, as big as the minister's ain, an' plenished wi' grand, auld solid gear, for he had naething else. There was a fower-posted bed wi' auld tapestry; an' a braw cabinet o' aik, that was fu' o' the minister's divinity books, an' put there to be out o' the gate; an' a wheen duds o' Janet's lying here an' there about the floor. But nae Janet could Mr. Soulis see; nor ony sign o' a contention. In he gaed (an' there's few that wad hae followed him) an' lookit a' round, an' listened. But there was naething to be heard, neither inside the manse nor in a' Ba'weary parish, an' naething to be seen but the muckle shadows turnin' round the can'le. An' then, a' at aince, the minister's heart played dunt an' stood stock-still; an' a cauld wind blew amang the hairs o' his heid. Whaten a weary sicht was that for the puir man's e'en! For there was Janet hangin' frae a nail beside the auld aik cabinet: her heid aye lay on her shouther, her e'en were steekit, the tongue projekit frae her mouth, an' her heels were twa feet clear abune the floor.

'God forgive us all!' thocht Mr. Soulis, 'poor Janet's dead.'

He cam' a step nearer to the corp; an' then his heart fair whammled in his inside. For by what cantrip it wad ill beseem a man to judge, she was hangin' frae a single nail an' by a single wursted thread for darnin' hose.

It's an awfu' thing to be your lane at nicht wi' siccan prodigies o' darkness; but Mr. Soulis was strong in the Lord. He turned an' gaed his ways oot o' that room, an'

lockit the door ahint him; an' step by step, doun the stairs, as heavy as leed; and set doun the can'le on the table at the stairfoot. He couldna pray, he couldna think, he was dreepin' wi' caul' swat, an' naething could he hear but the dunt-dunt-duntin' o' his ain heart. He micht maybe hae stood there an hour, or maybe twa, he minded sae little; when a' o' a sudden, he heard a laigh, uncanny steer up-stairs; a foot gaed to an' fro in the chalmer whaur the corp was hangin'; syne the door was opened, though he minded weel that he had lockit it; an' syne there was a step upon the landin', an' it seemed to him as if the corp was lookin' ower the rail and doun upon him whaur he stood.

He took up the can'le again (for he couldna want the licht), an' as saftly as ever he could, gaed straucht out o' the manse an' to the far end o' the causeway. It was aye pit-mirk; the flame o' the candle, when he set it on the grund, brunt steedy and clear as in a room; naething moved, but the Dule water seepin' and sabbin' doun the glen, an' yon unhaly footstep that cam' ploddin' doun the stairs inside the manse. He kenned the foot

ower weel, for it was Janet's; an' at ilka step that cam' a wee thing nearer, the cauld got deeper in his vitals. He commended his soul to Him that made an' keepit him; 'and, O Lord,' said he, 'give me strength this night to war against the powers of evil.'

By this time the foot was comin' through the passage for the door; he could hear a hand skirt alang the wa', as if the fearsome thing was feelin' for its way. The saughs tossed an' maned thegither, a long sigh cam' ower the hills, the flame o' the can'le was blawn aboot; an' there stood the corp of Thrawn Janet, wi' her grogram goun an' her black mutch, wi' the heid aye upon the shouther, an' the girn still upon the face o't—leevin', ye wad hae said—deid, as Mr. Soulis weel kenned—upon the threshold o' the manse.

It's a strange thing that the soul of man should be that thirled into his perishable body; but the minister saw that, an' his heart didna break.

She didna stand there lang; she began to move again an' cam' slowly towards Mr. Soulis whaur he stood under the saughs. A' the life o' his body, a' the strength o' his speerit, were glowerin' frae his e'en. It seemed she was gaun to speak, but wanted words, an' made a sign wi' the left hand. There cam' a clap o' wund, like a cat's fuff; oot gaed the can'le, the saughs skreighed like folk; an' Mr. Soulis kenned that, live or die, this was the end o't.

'Witch, beldame, devil!' he cried, 'I charge you, by the power of God, begone—if you be dead, to the grave—if you be damned, to hell.'

An' at that moment the Lord's ain hand out o' the Heevens struck the Horror whaur it stood; the auld,

deid, desecrated corp o' the witch-wife, sae lang keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by de'ils, lowed up like a brunstane spunk an' fell in ashes to the grund; the thunder followed, peal on dirlin' peal, the rairin' rain upon the back o' that; and Mr. Soulis lowped through the garden hedge, an' ran, wi' skelloch upon skelloch, for the clachan.

That same mornin', John Christie saw the Black Man pass the Muckle Cairn as it was chappin' six; before eicht, he gaed by the change-house at Knockdow; an' no' lang after, Sandy M'Lellan saw him gaun linkin' doun the braes frae Kilmackerlie. There's little doubt but it was him that dwelled sae lang in Janet's body; but he was awa' at last; an' sinsyne the de'il has never fashed us in Ba'weary.

But it was a sair dispensation for the minister; lang, lang he lay ravin' in his bed; an' frae that hour to this, he was the man ye ken the day.

THE TALE OF TOD LAPRAIK

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE TALE OF TOD LAPRAIK

MY FAITHER, TAM DALE, PEACE TO HIS banes, was a wild, sploring lad in his young days, wi' little wisdom and less grace. He was fond of a lass and fond of a glass, and fond of a ran-dan; but I could never hear tell that he was muckle use for honest employment. Frae ae thing to anither, he listed at last for a sodger and was in the garrison of this fort, which was the first way that ony of the Dales cam to set foot upon the Bass. Sorrow upon that service! The governor brewed his ain ale; it seems it was the warst conceivable. The rock was proveesioned frae the shore with vivers, the thing was ill-guided, and there were whiles when they büt to fish and shoot solans for their diet. To crown a', thir was the Days of the Persecution. The perishin' cauld chalmers were all occupeed wi' sants and martyrs, the saut of the yearth, of which it wasnae worthy. And though Tam Dale carried a firelock there, a single sodger, and liked a lass and a glass, as I was sayin', the mind of the man was mair just than set with his position. He had glints of the glory of the kirk; there were whiles when his dander rase to see the Lord's sants misguided, and shame covered him that he should be haulding a can'le (or carrying a firelock) in so black a business. There were nights of it when he was here on sentry, the place a' wheesht, the frosts o' winter maybe riving in the wa's, and he would hear ane o' the prisoners strike up a psalm, and the rest join in, and the

blessed sounds rising from the different chalmers—or dungeons, I would raither say—so that this auld craig in the sea was like a pairt of Heev'n. Black shame was on his saul; his sins hove up before him muckle as the Bass, and above a', that chief sin, that he should have a hand in hagging and hashing at Christ's Kirk. But the truth is that he resisted the spirit. Day cam, there were the rousing compainions, and his guid resolves depairtit.

In thir days, dwalled upon the Bass a man of God, Peden the Prophet was his name. Ye'll have heard tell of Prophet Peden. There was never the wale of him sinsyne, and it's a question wi' mony if there ever was his like afore. He was wild 's a peat-hag, fearsome to look at, fearsome to hear, his face like the day of judgment. The voice of him was like a solan's and dinnle'd in folks' lugs, and the words of him like coals of fire.

Now there was a lass on the rock, and I think she had little to do, for it was nae place for dacent weemen; but it seems she was bonny, and her and Tam Dale were very well agreed. It befell that Peden was in the gairden his lane at the praying when Tam and the lass cam by;

and what should the lassie do but mock with laughter at the sant's devotions? He rose and lookit at the twa o' them, and Tam's knees knoitered thegether at the look of him. But whan he spak, it was mair in sorrow than in anger. 'Poor thing, poor thing!' says he, and it was the lass he lookit at, 'I hear you skirl and laugh,' he says, 'but the Lord has a deid shot prepared for you, and at that surprising judgment ye shall skirl but the ae time!' Shortly thereafter she was daundering on the craigs wi' twa-three sodgers, and it was a blawy day. There cam a gwost of wind, claught her by the coats, and awa' wi' her bag and baggage. And it was remarked by the sodgers that she gied but the ae skirl.

Nae doubt this judgment had some weicht upon Tam Dale; but it passed again and him none the better. Ae day he was flyting wi' anither sodger-lad. 'Deil hae me!' quo' Tam, for he was a profane swearer. And there was Peden glowering at him, gash an' waefu'; Peden wi' his lang chafts an' luntin' een, the maud happed about his kist, and the hand of him held out wi' the black nails upon the finger-nebs—for he had nae care of the body. 'Fy, fy, poor man!' cries he, 'the poor fool man! *Deil hae me*, quo' he; an' I see the deil at his oxter.' The conviction of guilt and grace cam in on Tam like the deep sea; he flang doun the pike that was in his hands—'I will nae mair lift arms against the cause o' Christ!' says he, and was as gude's word. There was a sair fyke in the beginning, but the governor, seeing him resolved, gied him his dischairge, and he went and dwallt and merried in North Berwick, and had aye a gude name with honest folk frae that day on.

It was in the year seeventeen hunner and sax that the

Bass cam in the hands o' the Da'rymples, and there was twa men soucht the chairge of it. Baith were weel qualified, for they had baith been sodgers in the garrison, and kent the gate to handle solans, and the seasons and values of them. Forby that they were baith—or they baith seemed—earnest professors and men of comely conversation. The first of them was just Tam Dale, my faither. The second was ane Lapraik, whom the folk ca'd Tod Lapraik maistly, but whether for his name or his nature I could never hear tell. Weel, Tam gaed to see Lapraik upon this business, and took me, that was a toddlin' laddie, by the hand. Tod had his dwallin' in the lang loan benorth the kirkyaird. It's a dark uncanny loan, forby that the kirk has aye had an ill name since the days o' James the Saxt and the deevil's cantrips played therein when the Queen was on the seas; and as for Tod's house, it was in the mirkest end, and was little liked by some that kenned the best. The door was on the sneck that day, and me and my faither gaed straucht in. Tod was a wabster to his trade; his loom stood in the but. There he sat, a muckle fat, white hash of a man like

creish, wi' a kind of a holy smile that gart me scunner. The hand of him aye cawed the shuttle, but his een was steeked. We cried to him by his name, we skirled in the deid lug of him, we shook him by the shou'ther. Nae mainner o' service! There he sat on his dowp, an' cawed the shuttle and smiled like creish.

'God be guid to us,' says Tam Dale, 'this is no canny!'

He had jimp said the word, when Tod Lapraik cam to himsel'.

'Is this you, Tam?' says he. 'Haith, man! I'm blythe to see ye. I whiles fa' into a bit dwam like this,' he says; 'it's frae the stamach.'

Weel, they began to crack about the Bass and which of them twa was to get the warding o't, and by little and little cam to very ill words, and twined in anger. I mind weel, that as my faither and me gaed hame again, he cam ower and ower the same expression, how little he likit Tod Lapraik and his dwams.

'Dwam!' says he. 'I think folk hae brunt for dwams like yon.'

Aweel, my faither got the Bass and Tod had to go wantin'. It was remembered sinsyne what way he had ta'en the thing. 'Tam,' says he, 'ye hae gotten the better o' me aince mair, and I hope,' says he, 'ye'll find at least a' that ye expeckit at the Bass.' Which have since been thought remarkable expressions. At last the time came for Tam Dale to take young solans. This was a business he was weel used wi', he had been a craigsman frae a laddie, and trustit nane but himsel'. So there was he hingin' by a line an' speldering on the craig face, whaur it's hieest and steighest. Fower tenty lads were on the

tap, hauldin' the line and mindin' for his signals. But whaur Tam hung there was naething but the craig, and the sea belaw, and the solans skirling and flying. It was a braw spring morn, and Tam whustled as he claught in the young geese. Mony's the time I heard him tell of this experience, and aye the swat ran upon the man.

It chanced, ye see, that Tam keeked up, and he was awaur of a muckle solan, and the solan pyking at the line. He thocht this by-ordinar and outside the creature's habits. He minded that ropes was unco saft things, and the solan's neb and the Bass Rock unco hard, and that twa hunner feet were raither mair than he would care to fa'.

'Shoo!' says Tam. 'Awa', bird! Shoo, awa' wi' ye!' says he.

The solan keekit doun into Tam's face, and there was something unco in the creature's ee. Just the ae keek it gied, and back to the rope. But now it wroucht and warstl't like a thing dementit. There never was the solan made that wroucht as that solan wroucht; and it seemed

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to understand it's employ brawly, birzing the saft rope between the neb of it and a crunkled jag o' stane.

There gaed a cauld stend o' fear into Tam's heart. 'This thing is nae bird,' thinks he. His een turnt backward in his heid and the day gaed black about him. 'If I get a dwam here,' he thoucht, 'it's by wi' Tam Dale.' And he signalled for the lads to pu' him up.

And it seemed the solan understood about signals. For nae sooner was the signal made than he let be the rope, spried his wings, squawked out loud, took a turn flying, and dashed straucht at Tam Dale's een. Tam had a knife, he gart the cauld steel glitter. And it seemed the solan understood about knives, for nae suner did the steel glint in the sun than he gied the ae squawk, but laigher, like a body disappointit, and flegged aff about the roundness of the craig, and Tam saw him nae mair. And as sune as that thing was gane, Tam's heid drapt upon his shouther, and they pu'd him up like a deid corp, dadding on the craig.

A dram of brandy (which he went never without) broucht him to his mind, or what was left of it. Up he sat.

'Rin, Geordie, rin to the boat, mak' sure of the boat, man—rin!' he cries, 'or yon solan 'll have it awa',' says he.

The fower lads stared at ither, an' tried to whilly-wha him to be quiet. But naething would satisfy Tam Dale, till ane o' them had startit on aheid to stand sentry on the boat. The ithers askit if he was for down again.

'Na,' says he, 'and neither you nor me,' says he, 'and

as sune as I can win to stand on my twa feet we'll be aff frae this craig o' Sawtan.'

Sure eneuch, nae time was lost, and that was ower muckle; for before they won to North Berwick Tam was in a crying fever. He lay a' the simmer; and wha was sae kind as come speiring for him, but Tod Lapraik! Folk thocht afterwards that ilka time Tod cam near the house the fever had worsened. I kenna for that; but what I ken the best, that was the end of it.

It was about this time o' the year; my grandfaither was out at the white fishing; and like a bairn, I but to gang wi' him. We had a grand take, I mind, and the way that the fish lay broucht us near in by the Bass, whaur we forgaithered wi' anither boat that belanged to a man Sandie Fletcher in Castleton. He's no lang deid neither, or ye could speir at himsel'. Weel, Sandie hailed.

'What's yon on the Bass?' says he.

'On the Bass?' says grandfaither.

'Ay,' says Sandie,'on the green side o't.'

'Whatten kind of a thing?' says grandfaither. 'There canna be naething on the Bass but just the sheep.'

'It looks unco like a body,' quo' Sandie, who was nearer in.

'A body!' says we, and we nane of us likit that. For there was nae boat that could have broucht a man, and the key o' the prison yett hung ower my faither's heid at hame in the press bed.

We keept the twa boats closs for company, and crap in nearer hand. Grandfaither had a gless, for he had been a sailor, and the captain of a smack, and had lost her on the sands of Tay. And when we took the gless to it, sure

eneuch there was a man. He was in a crunkle o' green brae, a wee below the chaipel, a' by his lee lane, and lowped and flang and danced like a daft quean at a waddin'.

'It's Tod,' says grandfaither, and passed the gless to Sandie.

'Ay, it's him,' says Sandie.

'Or ane in the likeness o' him,' says grandfaither.

'Sma' is the differ,' quo' Sandie. 'De'il or warlock, I'll try the gun at him,' quo' he, and broucht up a fowling-piece that he aye carried, for Sandie was a notable famous shot in all that country.

'Haud your hand, Sandie,' says grandfaither; 'we maun see clearer first,' says he, 'or this may be a dear day's wark to the baith of us.'

'Hout!' says Sandie, 'this is the Lord's judgments surely, and be damned to it!' says he.

'Maybe ay, and maybe no,' says my grandfaither, worthy man! 'But have you a mind of the Procurator Fiscal, that I think ye'll have forgaithered wi' before,' says he.

This was ower true, and Sandie was a wee thing set ajee. 'Aweel, Edie,' says he, 'and what would be your way of it?'

'Ou, just this,' says grandfaither. 'Let me that has the fastest boat gang back to North Berwick, and let you bide here and keep an eye on Thon. If I cannae find Lapraik, I'll join ye and the twa of us'll have a crack wi' him. But if Lapraik's at hame, I'll rin up the flag at the harbour, and ye can try Thon Thing wi' the gun.'

Aweel, so it was agreed between them twa. I was just

a bairn, an' clum in Sandie's boat, whaur I thoucht I would see the best of the employ. My grandsire gied Sandie a siller tester to pit in his gun wi' the leid draps, bein' mair deidly again bogles. And then the ae boat set aff for North Berwick, an' the tither lay whaur it was and watched the wanchancy thing on the brae-side.

A' the time we lay there it lowped and flang and capered and span like a teetotum, and whiles we could hear it skelloch as it span. I hae seen lassies, the daft queans, that would lowp and dance a winter's nicht, and still be lowping and dancing when the winter's day cam in. But there would be folk there to hauld them company, and the lads to egg them on; and this thing was its lee-lane. And there would be a fiddler diddling his el-bock in the chimney-side; and this thing had nae music but the skirling of the solans. And the lassies were bits o' young things wi' the reid life dinnling and stending in their members; and this was a muckle, fat, creishy man, and him fa'n in the vale o' years. Say what ye like, I maun say what I believe. It was joy was in the crea-

ture's heart; the joy o' hell, I daursay: joy whatever. Mony a time I have askit mysel', why witches and warlocks should sell their sauls (whilk are their maist dear possessions) and be auld, duddy, wrunkl't wives or auld, feckless, doddered men; and then I mind upon Tod Lapraik dancing a' they hours by his lane in the black glory of his heart. Nae doubt they burn for it in muckle hell, but they have a grand time here of it, whatever!—and the Lord forgie us!

Weel, at the hinder end, we saw the wee flag yirk up to the mast-heid upon the harbour rocks. That was a' Sandie waited for. He up wi' the gun, took a deleeberate aim, an' pu'd the trigger. There cam' a bang and then ae waefu' skirl frae the Bass. And there were we rubbin' our een and lookin' at ither like daft folk. For wi' the bang and the skirl the thing had clean disappeared. The sun glintit, the wund blew, and there was the bare yaird whaur the Wonder had been lowping and flinging but ae second syne.

The hale way hame I roared and grat wi' the terror of that dispensation. The grawn folk were nane sae muckle better; there was little said in Sandie's boat but just the name of God; and when we won in by the pier, the harbour rocks were fair black wi' the folk waitin' us. It seems they had fund Lapraik in ane of his dwams, cawing the shuttle and smiling. Ae lad they sent to hoist the flag, and the rest abode there in the wabster's house. You may be sure they liked it little; but it was a means of grace to severals that stood there praying in to themsel's (for nane cared to pray out loud) and looking on thon awesome thing as it cawed the shuttle. Syne, upon a suddenty, and wi' the ae dreidfu' skelloch, Tod sprang

up frae his hinderlands and fell forrit on the wab, a bluidy corp.

When the corp was examined the leid draps hadnae played buff upon the warlock's body; sorrow a leid drap was to be fund; but there was grandfaither's siller tester in the puddock's heart of him.