

(22)

THE following P O E M will, by many Readers, be well enough understood; but, for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, Notes are added, to give some account of the principal Charms and Spells of that Night, so big with Prophecy to the Peasantry in the West of Scotland. The passion of prying into Futurity makes a striking part of the history of Human-nature, in it's rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honor the Author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own.



H A L L O W E E N. *

*Yes! let the Rich deride, the Proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.*

GOLDSMITH.

I.

UPON that *night*, when Fairies light,
On *Cassilis Downans* † dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly courfers prance;

* Is thought to be a night when Witches, Devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands: particularly, those aerial people, the Fairies, are said, on that night, to hold a grand Anniversary.

† Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.

Or for *Colean*, the rout is taen,
 Beneath the moon's pale beams;
 There, up the *Cove*, * to stray an' rove,
 Amang the rocks an' streams
 To sport that night.

II.

Amang the bonie, winding banks,
 Where *Doon* rins, wimplin, clear,
 Where BRUCE † ance rul'd the martial
 ranks,
 An' shook his *Carrick* spear,
 Some merry, friendly, countra folks,
 Together did convene,
 To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
 An' haud their *Halloween*
 Fu' blythe that night.

* A noted cavern near *Colean*-house, called the *Cove* of *Colean*; which, as well as *Cassilis Downans*, is famed, in country story, for being a favourite haunt of Fairies.

† The famous family of that name, the ancestors of ROBERT the great Deliverer of his country, were Earls of *Carrick*.

III.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
 Mair braw than when they're fine;
 Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe,
 Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':
 The lads fae trig, wi' wooer-babs,
 Weel knotted on their garten,
 Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs,
 Gar lasses hearts gang startin
 Whyles fast at night.

IV.

Then, first an' foremost, thro' the kail,
 Their *stocks* * maun a' be fought ance;

* The first ceremony of Halloween, is, pulling each a *Stock*, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their Spells—the husband or wife. If any *yird*, or earth, stick to the root, that is *tocher*, or fortune; and the taste of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or to give them their ordinary appellation, the *runts*, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house, are, according to the priority of placing the *runts*, the names in question.

They steek their een, an' grape an' wale,
 For muckle anes, an' straught anes.
 Poor hav'rel *Will* fell aff the drift,
 An' wander'd thro' the *Bow-kail*,
 An' pow't, for want o' better shift,
 A *runt* was like a fow-tail
 Sae bow't that night.

V.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
 They roar an' cry a' throw'ther;
 The vera *wee-things*, toddlan, rin,
 Wi' stocks out owre their shouther:
 An' gif the *custock's* sweet or sour,
 Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
 Syne coziely, aboon the door,
 Wi' cannie care, they've plac'd them
 To lye that night.

VI.

The lassies staw frae 'mang them a',
 To pou their *stalks o' corn*; *

* They go to the barn-yard, and pull each, at three several

But *Rab* slips out, an' jinks about,

Behint the muckle thorn:

He grippet *Nelly* hard an' fast;

Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;

But her *tap-pickle* maist was lost,

When kiutlan in the *Fause-house* *

Wi' him that night.

VII.

The auld Guidwife's weel-hoordet *nits* †

Are round an' round divided,

An' monie lads an' lasses fates

Are there that night decided:

N

times, a stalk of Oats. If the third stalk wants the *top-pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will want the Maidenhead.

* When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green, or wet, the Stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c. makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a *Fause-house*.

† Burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire; and according as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the Courtship will be.

Some kindle, couthie, side by side,
 An' *burn* thegither trimly;
 Some start awa, wi' faucy pride,
 An' jump out owre the chimlie
 Fu' high that night.

VIII.

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie e'e;
 Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
 But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
 She says in to hersel:
 He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
 As they wad never mair part,
 Till fuff! he started up the lum,
 An' *Jean* had e'en a fair heart
 To see't that night.

IX.

Poor Willie, wi' his *bow-kail runt*,
 Was *brunt* wi' primsie *Mallie*;
 An' *Mary*, nae doubt, took the drunt,
 To be compar'd to *Willie*:

Mall's nit lap out, wi' pridefu' fling,
 An' her ain fit, it brunt it;
 While *Willie* lap, an' fwoor by *jing*,
 'Twas just the way he wanted
 To be that night.

X.

Nell had the *Fause-house* in her min',
 She pits herfel an' *Rob* in;
 In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
 Till white in ase they're fobbin:
Nell's heart was dancin at the view;
 She whisper'd *Rob* to leuk for't:
Rob, stownlins, prie'd her bonie mou,
 Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
 Unseen that night.

XI.

But *Merran* sat behint their backs,
 Her thoughts on *Andrew Bell*;
 She lea'es them gashan at their cracks,
 An' slips out by herfel:

She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
 An' for the *kiln* she goes then,
 An' darklins grapet for the *bauks*,
 And in the *blue-clue* * throws then,
 Right fear't that night.

XII.

An' ay she *win't*, an' ay she *fwat*,
 I wat she made nae *jaukin*;
 Till something *held* within the *pat*,
 Guid L—d! but she was *quaukin*!
 But whether 'twas the *Deil* himsel,
 Or whether 'twas a *bauk-en'*,
 Or whether it was *Andrew Bell*,
 She did na wait on talkin
 To spier that night.

XIII.

Wee *Jenny* to her *Graunie* says,
 ' Will ye go wi' me *Graunie*?

* Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions. Steal out, all alone, to the *kiln*, and, darkling, throw into the *pot*, a clew of blue yarn: wind it in a new clew off the old one; and towards the latter end, some-

‘ I’ll eat the apple * at the glass,
‘ I gat frae uncle Johnie :
She fuff’t her pipe wi’ sic a lunt,
In wrath she was fae vap’rin,
She notic’t na, an aizle brunt
Her braw, new, worset apron
Out thro’ that night.

XIV.

‘ Ye little Skelpie-limmer’s-face!
‘ I daur you try sic sportin,
‘ As seek the *foul Thief* onie place,
‘ For him to spae your fortune :
‘ Nae doubt but ye may get a *sight* !
‘ Great cause ye hae to fear it ;
‘ For monie a ane has gotten a fright,
‘ An’ liv’d an’ di’d deleeret,
‘ On sic a night.

thing will hold the thread : demand, *wha hauds ?* i. e. who holds ? and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the christian and surname of your future Spouse.

* Take a candle, and go, alone, to a looking glass : eat an apple before it, and some traditions say you should comb your hair all the time : the face of your conjugal companion, *to be,* will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

XV.

- † Ae Hairst afore the *Sherra-moor*,
 ‘ I mind’t as weel’s yestreen,
 † I was a gilpey then, I’m sure,
 ‘ I was na past fyfteen :
 † The Simmer had been cauld an’ wat,
 ‘ An’ *Stuff* was unco green ;
 † An’ ay a rantan *Kirn* we gat,
 ‘ An’ just on *Halloween*
 ‘ It fell that night.

XVI.

- † Our *Stibble-rig* was *Rab M’Graen*,
 ‘ A clever, sturdy fallow ;
 † His Sin gat *Eppie Sim* wi’ wean,
 ‘ That liv’d in *Achmacalla* :
 † He gat *hemp-feed*, * I mind it weel,
 ‘ An’ he made unco light o’t ;

* Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp feed ; harrowing it with any thing you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then, ‘ Hemp feed I saw thee, Hemp feed I saw thee ; and him (or her) that is to be my true-love, come after me and pou thee.’ Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the

‘ But monie a day was *by himsel*,
‘ He was fae fairly frightened
‘ That vera night.’

XVII.

Then up gat fechtan *Jamie Fleck*,
An’ he swoor by his confcience,
That he could *saw hemp-seed* a peck;
For it was a’ but nonsense:
The auld guidman raught down the pock,
An’ out a handfu’ gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae ’mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see’d him,
An’ try’t that night.

XVIII.

He marches thro’ amang the stacks,
Tho’ he was something sturtan;
The *graiþ* he for a *harrow* taks,
An’ haurls at his curpan:

attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, ‘come after
‘ me and shaw thee,’ that is, shew thyself; in which case it
simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, ‘come
‘ after me and harrow thee.’

And ev'ry now an' then, he says,
' Hemp-feed I saw thee,
' An' her that is to be my las,
' Come after me an' draw thee
' As fast this night.'

XIX.

He whistl'd up *lord Lenox' march*,
To keep his courage cheary;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was fae fley'd an' eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his showther gae a keek,
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle
Out owre that night.

XX.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnan out,
An' hear the fad narration:

He swoor 'twas hilchan *Jean M'Crow*,
 Or crouchie *Merran Humphie*,
 Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
 An' wha was it but *Grumpie*
 Asteer that night?

XXI.

Meg fain wad to the *Barn* gaen,
 To winn three wechts o' naething; *
 But for to meet the Deil her lane,
 She pat but little faith in:
 She gies the Herd a pickle nits,
 An' twa red cheeket apples,
 To watch, while for the *Barn* she sets,
 In hopes to see *Tam Kipples*
 That vera night.

O

* This charm must likewise be performed, unperceived and alone. You go to the *barn*, and open both doors; taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger, that the Being, about to appear, may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country-dialect, we call a *wecht*; and go thro' all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time, an apparition will pass thro' the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.

XXII.

She turns the key, wi' cannie thraw,
 An' owre the threshold ventures;
 But first on *Sawnie* gies a ca',
 Syne bauldly in she enters:
 A *rattin* rattl'd up the wa',
 An' she cry'd, L—d preserve her!
 An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
 An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
 Fu' fast that night.

XXIII.

They hoy't out Will, wi' fair advice;
 They hecht him some fine braw ane;
 It chanc'd the *Stack* he *faddom't* thrice,*
 Was timmer-propt for thrawin:
 He taks a swirlie, auld *moss-oak*,
 For some black, groufome *Carlin*;

* Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a *Bear-stack*, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms, the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.

An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
 Till skin in blypes cam haurlin
 Aff's nieves that night.

XXIV.

A wanton widow *Leezie* was,
 As cantie as a kittlen;
 But Och! that night, amang the shaws,
 She gat a fearfu' fettlin!
 She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
 An' owre the hill gaed scrievin,
 Whare *three Lairds' lan's met at a burn*,*
 To dip her *left sark-sleeve* in,
 Was bent that night.

XXV.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As thro' the glen it wimpl't;

O 2

* You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south-running spring or rivulet, where 'three Lairds' lands meet,' and dip your left shirt-sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Ly awake; and sometime near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.

Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
 Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
 Wi' bickerin, dancin dazzle;
 Whyles cooket underneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazle
 Unseen that night.

XXVI.

Amang the brachens, on the brae,
 Between her an' the moon,
 The Deil, or else an outler Quey,
 Gat up an' gae a croon:
 Poor *Leezie's* heart maist lap the hool;
 Near lav'rock-height she jumpet,
 But mist a fit, an' in the *pool*,
 Out owre the lugs she plumpet,
 Wi' a plunge that night.

XXVII.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
 The *Luggies* * three are ranged;

* Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in

And ev'ry time great care is taen,
 To see them duely changed:
 Auld, uncle *John*, wha *wedlock's* joys,
 Sin' *Mar's-year* did desire,
 Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
 He heav'd them on the fire,
 In wrath that night.

XXVIII.

Wi' merry fangs, an' friendly cracks,
 I wat they did na weary;
 And unco tales, an' funnie jokes,
 Their sports were cheap an' cheary:
 Till *butter'd So'ns*, * wi' fragrant lunt,
 Set a' their gabs a steerin;
 Syne, wi' a social glafs o' strunt,
 They parted aff careerin
 Fu' blythe that night.

another, and leave the third empty: blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of Matrimony, a Maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times; and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.

* Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the *Halloween Supper*.