

CHAPTER XX.

BURNS—"WINSOME WILLIE"—TOM WALKER—"CUTTY SARK."

IN many of the earlier editions of Burns' poems, published after his death, and in some of the cheap editions still, there is found a humorous and scourging "Epistle to a Tailor," in reply to one which the said tailor had transmitted to the poet, admonishing him very severely with regard to his conduct and conversation. This poem is now known to have been a forgery, but which Burns was made aware of at the time by its author, his friend and correspondent, "Winsome Willie." So admirable an imitation was it of the language, style, and sentiment of the great bard himself, that it long passed without detection; and was even regarded as one of his choicest and raciest effusions, from the salient humour and keen satire which it contained. Yet so great and penetrative was the sagacity of some of the early critics, that it was only after considerable hesitation they agreed to pass it as a genuine production. But although not from the pen or the brain of Burns, yet, as we have said, he was cognizant of its existence; and the opinion he gave of it—not generally known—is one of the reasons why we refer to it at present. Cunningham says he had heard it surmised that Burns wrote the epistle himself for the sake of the answer; and he seems to believe it, as he considers it a compliment to his genius, but not a just one, in being able to write down to the level

of the verses it contains. But it was not so. The original letter in the tailor's autograph is now before us, and could not by any possibility belong to Burns.

At the time that Burns was farmer at Mossgiel, William Simpson was schoolmaster in Ochiltree, and the two were on friendly—indeed, intimate—terms. Simpson had been at first intended for the church, and had proceeded some length in his college curriculum towards the pulpit, when he suddenly stopped short, bade farewell to the clergy, and adopted the humble but no less important profession of a teacher of the young. His abilities as a poet were considerably above mediocrity, although he has been characterized by Chambers as only a “rhymer,” and he has left behind him a large volume of poems in manuscript, which have never been published. During his lifetime he was often urged to give them to the world, but he always declined, his constant reply being that he wrote for amusement and not for profit. Burns, however, seems to have thought him more than a “rhymer,” when he addressed him in the following strains:—

“ Auld Coila now may fidge fu' fain,
 She's gotten poets o' her ain,
 Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
 But tune their lays,
 Till echoes a' resound again
 Her weel-sung praise.

.

“ Ramsay and famous Fergusson
 Gied Forth and Tay a lift aboon;

Yarrow and Tweed to monie a tune
 Owre Scotland rings;
 While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon,
 Naebody sings.

“ Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine
 Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line;
 But, Willie, set your fit to mine
 An' cock your crest,
 We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
 Up wi' the best.

“ Fareweel, my 'rhyme-composing brither!'
 We've been owre lang unkenned to ither,
 Now let us lay our heads thegither
 In love fraternal;
 May envy wallop in a tether,
 Black fiend, infernal!”

It was with difficulty that we persuaded Simpson's brother to repeat to us any of William's poems, though he often spoke of him as a great crony with Burns, and to grant a copy was altogether out of the question. However, we secretly jotted down in shorthand one or two of them, as old Patrick, himself a poet, one evening at his fireside in the school-house of Ochiltree cast his broad shoulders back into his arm-chair, and his soul into the light of other days, when he brought the first copy of the “Twa Herds” to his father's house, and his brother began correspondence with the author. We shall give one or two of Simpson's poetic effusions. In the village of Ochiltree there lived an old pensioner, William Weir, who had seen much military service, and

who thought himself entitled to greater remuneration than he received. His pay was one shilling a-day, which he thought too little for his wants, and therefore he caused a petition to be forwarded to the Duke of York for an increase; but he received no reply to his application. William boldly addressed a memorial in his own hand to the Duke, which procured him an additional sixpence. When he died, Simpson wrote the following epitaph for his tombstone:—

“EPITAPH ON WILLIAM WEIR.

“ Faithfully is lodged here
 The mortal part of William Weir.
 William, full of martial mettle,
 Stood the brunt of many a battle;
 Hardships many underwent,
 Lived a hero—died a saint.
 Moments military past,
 Off his armour he has cast,
 Knapsack, sword, and gun flung by,
 Where his regimentals lie,
 Full of hope that when the last
 Trumpet sounds its potent blast,
 Starting all of every host,
 Dead and living to their post,
 William will (in armour clear,
 Never more to rust) appear,
 Ranked among the faithful few,
 Glorious at the Grand Review.”

When the life of his Majesty George III. was attempted by James Hadfield, in 1800, fortunately without success, various congratulatory addresses were presented to the King on his providential escape. The

following one was drawn up by Simpson for the Scottish schoolmasters to sign; but whether or not it was forwarded for presentation in the proper quarter, we cannot say:—

“ MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN—

“ While reverend priests, who through the nation
 Hold regicide in detestation,
 Crowd round, in keen congratulation,
 Britannia’s throne,
 Adoring for your preservation
 Kind Heaven alone;

“ We Dominies benorth the Tweed,
 Wha inly shudder at the deed
 Of firing at a monarch’s head,
 In heartfelt strains
 The Power praised that wis’d the lead
 Out o’er your brains.

“ For, like yoursel’, we’re monarchs a’,
 Tho’ mair despotic as to law;
 And shall, while treason we misca’,
 Rejoice till death,
 That Hadfield neither made you fa’,
 Nor did you scaith.

“ Now Lon’on town rings like a bell,
 Wi’ ‘Jamie Hadfield’s no himsel’;
 It may be sae, I canna tell;
 But this attempt,
 Unless ye hang him, argues well
 Ye’re scant o’ hemp.

“ He’s no himsel’! what plague then is he?
 Meg Nicholson, that hav’rel hizzy—

Wha blew the pipe till grown sae dizzy—
 Her rusty gully
 Drew, and drave (the Deil's aye busy),
 Wi' murderous sally.

“ To ettle death wi' sic a shaft,
 Convinced us a' that Meg was daft;
 And therefore she's humanely left,
 Untwin'd o' life;
 Of liberty alone bereft,
 And yon auld knife.

“ But Meg's by far owre weel ta'en care o',
 And selfish Hadfield hearing thereof—
 Her lot to share, he coft a pair o'
 Pistols indeed;
 And ane discharged within a hair o'
 Your royal head !

“ If legislation prove sae callous,
 As wink at sic audacious fallows;
 If rascals may get up to kill us,
 And no be snibbet,
 What signify your laws, your gallows,
 Your jail, your jibbet ?

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“ May a' concerned in ony plot
 'Gainst you or yours be hanged and shot,
 Amen. When Satan thus has got
 His ain, we'll sing
 The fervent prayer of every Scot,
 GOD SAVE THE KING !

The above specimens of Simpson's muse show that he was something more than a “rhymer.” But we turn to another character. In a small cottage called

Pool, not far from the village of Ochiltree, lived, now upwards of a century ago, a man of the name of Thomas Walker, by trade a tailor, by propensity a poet. Of Walker's life little is now remembered, his position in society not being one which exposed him much to public notice beyond the bounds of his immediate neighbourhood. As a tradesman he was well skilled in his craft, and was greatly resorted to when the needle and shears were in requisition. He was a member of that portion of the dissenting Church called the Burghers, and during the whole course of his life he engaged in the ordinances of religion with a zeal and piety indicative of the pleasure he took in their observance. He was none of those, however, who consider an unbending gravity an indispensable requisite for the character of a Christian. He was gay and joyous, could break a joke upon his friend, and take one in return. Apart from his religious duties, his whole soul was wrapt in the worship of the Muses; and if he was favoured with but few visits from the celebrated Nine themselves, he had frequent intercourse with their nearest kin. As a poet he does not rank in the first class certainly, nor did he make any pretension to this. His ideas of poetry do not appear to have been the most correct. With him the whole charm of poetizing seemed to consist in a good jingle and a host of verses. From a long habit of throwing his thoughts into rhyme he had acquired great facility in making a stanza on the most trivial occurrence, and the shortest notice. Once on a time, while plying his vocation in a farm-house in the neighbourhood, one of the servants entered the kitchen,

and in the absence of the mistress purloined a small slice of beef from a ham hanging overhead, at the same time addressing the tailor with—"Noo, Tam, ye're no to tell the guidwife, or mak' a sang on me, for takin' this bit thin skliffer," to which Tom immediately gave the following impromptu:—

"Ye greedy-like thief,
 Let be the hung beef,
 And meddle nae mair wi' the ham,
 Or else the guidwife
 Will raise up a strife,
 And lay a' the wyte o't on Tam."

At the time Simpson was enjoying the friendship and correspondence of Burns, his neighbour, the tailor, was ambitious of a similar honour, and did his utmost to secure it, but without success. Though labouring under the difficulties of a limited education, yet he possessed the feelings and affections of a poet. Many a late and early hour he devoted to the Muses, but the wants of a family were to be attended to, and the flow of some melodious stanza was cruelly interrupted by his having to mount the board. Yet there sat he, whistling, singing, joking, and rhyming from morning till night, with Rab Burns o' Mossgiel floating uppermost in his mind. Mustering courage, he sent the following letter to Burns, properly addressed, but weeks passed and no answer was returned:—

"EPISTLE TO ROBERT BURNS.

"What fine amusement's this I hear,
 That doth my dowie spirits cheer?

It's Robin, fam'd baith far and near
 For makin' rhyme,
 Whilk sounded sweetly in my ear,
 Noo mony a time.

“ Some cantie callan thou maun be;
 Altho' I never did thee see,
 Fain wad I shake a paw wi' thee,
 And crack a blink;
 But thou'rt owre far awa for me,
 I really think.

“ Fine cantie chiel, I do declare,
 O, wert thou near a mile or mair,
 Tho' scant o' time, I wadna care
 To gang and crack,
 And sit wi' thee baith lang and sair
 Ere I cam' back.

“ Or could we meet some Mauchline fair—
 I sometimes tak' a bottle there—
 Thou'd be as welcome to a share
 As thou could'st be;
 Wae worth the purse that wadna spair
 A drink to thee.

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“ I'm yet but young, and new set out,
 My rhymes begin to rin about,
 And aye I ken I get a clout
 Frae you and Willie;
 Ye ken him weel, without a doubt,
 Your rhyming billie.

“ He teaches weans the muckle A's,
 And keeps a pair o' leather taws,
 But ne'er lays on without a cause,
 Yet fleys them a';
 Lang may he wag about the wa's,
 And never fa'.

“ Were you and Willie owre an ingle,
 Where mutchkin stoups and glasses jingle,
 You twa wad mak’ a bonny pingle,
 I’m sure o’ that;
 A pair o’ you is seen but single,
 In ony spat.

“ Fair fa’ ye, lads, ye’re no that slack,
 Fu’ weel I like to hear your knack;
 Can Will and Allan be come back,
 That lang are dead?
 Hoot, no; ye’re twa raised up to crack,
 Just in their stead.

“ But, Robin, when cam’ ye asteer?
 It hasna been this mony a year;
 Ye like auld warl’ folk appear,
 That liv’d langsyne—
 So your auld fashiont taunt and jeer
 Put me in min’

“ O’ some auld folk that I hae seen,
 Sit roun’ the ingle late at e’en,
 Wi’ lang e’ebrows out owre their een,
 And glower at me,
 As if a ferlie I had been
 For them to see.

“ They sat about the ingle lowes,
 And fley’d me talking about coves,
 Witches and warlocks, dead men’s pows,
 Till I was weary;
 The sweat amaist ran aff my brows,
 I was sac cery.

.

“ But, Robin, between me and you,
 Think ye, maun a’ thae things be true?

I ken ye're brawlie fit to show
 Me what ye think;
 I heard some rhymes o' yours a' through,
 And weel they clink.

“ O, but my heart wad be fu' light,
 In Ochiltree to get a sight
 O' your braw rhyme, sae trim and tight,
 As ye can 'dite it;
 So sit ye doon a while some night,
 And rhyme and write it.

“ Direct to Tam that mak's the claes—
 Some tell me that I jag the flaes;
 But gin they ding me owre the braes,
 They'll ne'er do mair,
 For I might break baith shins and tae,
 And that fu' sair.

“THOMAS WALKER.”

Receiving no reply to this, he sent Burns another, in which he fully and freely gave his opinion of the poet's morality, but at the same time not exculpating himself. The following stanzas are a specimen of his second epistle:—

“ Fu' weel ye ken ye'll gang to hell,
 Gin ye persist in doin' ill;
 Wae's me, ye're hurlin' doon the hill
 Withouten dread,
 An' ye'll get leave to swear your fill
 After ye're dead.

“ O Rab! lay by thae foolish tricks,
 An' steer nae mair the female sex,

Or some day ye'll come through the pricks,
 An' that ye'll see;
 Ye'll fin't hard leevin' at auld Nick's—
 I'm wae for thee.

“ We're owre like those wha think it fit,
 To stuff their noddles fu' o' wit,
 And yet content in darkness sit,
 Wha shun the light,
 To let them see doon to the pit
 That lang dark night.

“ But fareweel, Rab, I maun awa,
 May He that made us keep us a',
 For that would be a dreadfu' fa',
 An' hurt us sair;
 Lad, ye would never mend awa,
 Sae Rab, tak' care.”

No answer was ever received to this letter either, and the poor tailor was sadly grieved, and almost demented, at the seeming slight. Day after day did he make his complaint to Simpson of Burns' unkindness in not writing him. To gratify Tom's ardent longings, Simpson wrote in Burns' name the poem to which we have referred, entitled “Epistle to a Tailor,” and sent it up to Pool. Almost half-naked, and ecstatic with joy, Walker rushed into Simpson's school, crying, “O Willie, Willie, I hae got ane noo; a clencher; read it man, read it.” With ill-restrained laughter he read it, and returned it to the tailor, who religiously preserved it till the day of his death without ever discovering the hoax which had been played upon him. A few days afterwards Simpson met Burns, and reproached him for not writing

to the tailor. Burns said, "Man, Willie, I aye intended to write the bodie, but never got it dune." Simpson then told the whole story, and read to him the answer he had sent in his name. Burns gave him a thump on the shoulder and said, "Od, Willie, ye hae thrashed the tailor far better than I could hae dune." Many, many summers have come and gone, shedding a mellow lustre over fair Ochiltree, since "Winsome Willie" followed his famed correspondent and friend to "the land o' the leal." A longer period has passed away since Tom Walker was gathered to his fathers; but the memory of all three is yet fresh among the old inhabitants of the village, and their names are never mentioned but with respect.

Among the minor celebrities of Burns' acquaintance who have given an interest to his musings, and who in return have been honoured with niches in the edifice of his fame, there is one who occupies a most prominent place, and who, we believe, will be among the very last to be forgotten. Yet, conspicuous as her position is, and distinguished the part she is represented as having performed so well, we do not remember having seen recorded of her any notice, biographical, anecdotal, or obituary, beyond what has been transmitted in the poet's tale. Others have had their historians and their commentators, tracing their genealogies, delineating their characters, describing their persons, and registering whatever else has been known or reported of them; but notwithstanding the havoc she wrought, the dread she inspired, and the prominence she held, the memorials of her history seem even more meagre and scanty than

the famous garment which contributed to gain her an immortal name.

“Tam o’ Shanter” we know as Douglas Graham, a gash, honest, Carrick farmer on the Culzean shore, somewhat addicted to sociality, late hours, and bibulous habits on market days in Ayr. His wife, Kate, we know as Helen M’Taggart, superstitious, credulous in witches and bogles, and peculiarly eloquent in a certain kind of discourse when her liege lord was himself both the subject and the principal auditor. “Souter Johnny” we also know as John Davidson, an itinerant house-to-house cobbler, common in olden times, and who repudiated the maxim that “the cobbler should ever stick to his last.” But who was “Cutty Sark”? None can tell. Assuredly she was no myth. Yet what is known or remembered of her more than that she was the belle of the famous midnight carousal in Alloway Kirk, and occasionally practised disastrous pranks among the fishermen and farmers on the Carrick shore? We have lately obtained a few particulars respecting this notable weird woman from a respectable and trustworthy source, the friend of one who knew her intimately, and whom she presented, a few hours before her death, with a portion of her household chattels as a token of her gratitude for the kindness she had received from him during a long period of years—John Murdoch of Laighpark Kiln.

It may seem wonderful, but it is yet true, that however disreputable may be the character of a witch, there have been many claimants to the title of “Cutty Sark;” not, of course, by the parties themselves, but by their descendants, to whom “distance lends enchantment to

the view," and who, now seeing the immortality the character has attained through the poet's genius, are anxious to claim kindred with the ill-starred quean. The real "Cutty Sark" was Katherine Steven, or, as curtailed in the dialect of the district, Kate Steen, by which she was commonly called, for no one dared to address her by her *sobriquet* through fear of the sad consequences which might ensue. She was born in a cottage near the Maidens, and was brought up by her grandmother at Laighpark, in the parish of Kirkoswald, on the Carrick shore, where she paid the debt of nature many years ago, in a state of extreme indigence, when she had attained a good old age, yet generally dreaded to the last.

When Burns was attending Kirkoswald school, he was intimately acquainted with the dwellers along the Turnberry coast. Shanter, the residence of Tam, Glenfit, the abode of "Souter Johnny," and Laighpark were placed in the immediate neighbourhood of each other, with other cottages around, such as those of the miller and the smith. Kate Steen and her "reverend granny" were both well known to the poet, and many an hour he spent in their shieling, listening to the stories of the withered beldame about pirates and smugglers; and also spell-bound by the unconscious cantrips of the young witch Kate.

We usually associate the idea of witchcraft with extreme ugliness, deformity, and old age; but history informs us that the young and the fair have oftentimes been branded with the opprobrious epithet, and made to suffer the punishment which was accounted due.

Saturday, in the Devil's Calendar, was the witches' Sabbath; and it is interesting to mark the synchronical accuracy of the poet in fixing the time of the jubilant carousal—it was early on Saturday morning. The market-day in Ayr being then, as it still is, on Friday, the Carrick farmer had sat "boozing at the nappy," till "the hour, of night's black arch the keystone," when he mounted his mare and took the road homeward. By the time he reached Alloway Kirk, the morning was in and the orgies were begun.

The title of "Cutty Sark" was not an original appellation of the poet's invention, though it was new in the use he made of it to the young wench of Kirkoswald shore. In a letter to Captain Grose, when collecting his "Antiquities of Scotland," he mentions three witch stories connected with Alloway Kirk, in one of which there is an account of a merry-making similar to that of his own tale, or which was rather the foundation of his tale, and when a belated farmer "was so tickled, that he involuntarily burst out with a loud laugh, 'Weel luppen, Maggie, wi' the short sark!' and, recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed." In this, then, we have the first idea of "Cutty Sark," and what was predicated of Maggie is happily converted into an appellation for Nanny. But why Nanny? There was doubtless the same reason for calling Kate Steen *Nanny*, as for calling Douglas Graham *Tum*, and his wife, Helen M'Taggart, *Kate*—a desire to avoid the delicacy, and the not overagreeable consequences of direct personality. But to return.

Kate Steen was universally acknowledged to be a woman of very industrious habits, and was of necessity frugal and economical of whatever she obtained. She was accustomed when travelling from house to house to take her tow rock and spindle or twirling-pin with her, and spin as she went along. Her kind and obliging disposition secured her a warm reception among the farm-houses in the neighbourhood, and she always returned to her shieling at Laighpark Kiln laden with an abundant supply of the common necessaries of life. Her case was remarkable, but, we believe, by no means peculiar, in having the weird character forcibly thrust upon her. She not only made no pretensions, but repudiated the idea, of being considered a witch; yet a witch she was held to be in public estimation, and in those days that was enough. Her supposed insight into futurity, and acquaintance with the destinies of men, led also to the belief that she possessed a sway over fate from an intimate connection with Satanic power. In after life the peculiarity of her dress assisted in no small degree in investing her with supernatural agency; and, consequently, so much was she dreaded by young and old, that whenever she was espied on the highway afar off, with her rock and tow, a different road was taken to avoid coming in contact with her, as her presence produced great anxiety and fear, except when she was known to be favourably disposed. Doubtless she had the foibles and infirmities of her sex and calling; and it was, perhaps, not altogether exaggeration when it was said that she was not reluctant on certain occasions to tell, with an ominous shake of

the head, that her meal barrel was nearly empty, and that kail and water made but thin broth. Yet it was seldom this necessity was pressed upon her; for, whether from love or fear, she received a seemingly cordial welcome, and her departure home gave her no cause to suspect its truth. Still, on some occasions, the complaint of Mause might have been hers:—

“ Hard luck, alake! when poverty and eild,
Weeds out o’ fashion, and a lonely bield,
Wi’ a sma’ cast o’ wiles, should, in a twitch,
Gie ane the hatefu’ name ‘A wrinkled witch.’
The fool imagines, as do mony sic,
That I’m a witch, in compact wi’ ‘Auld Nick.’”

Kate Steen was of *low* stature, even for a woman, though we should infer differently from the description given of her as—

“ Ae handsome wench and walie.”

and also for the dexterous part she performed in detailing “noble Maggie” at the “keystane o’ the brig.” But Burns must be here considered as using a poet’s license, either for the sake of the rhyme, or to lend an additional grace to his heroine, even though a witch. A poet’s *witches*, as well as his *wenches*, are oftentimes very exaggerated descriptions of humanity. Burns’ lyric heroines, though adorned with the epithets “loveliest,” “fairest,” “bonniest,” “sweetest,” and “beyond compare,” were many of them, after all, very mediocre specimens of the masterwork of nature. Nay, some of them, it is said, were scarcely up to what is generally regarded as the minimum standard of female beauty. So, in the

description of "Cutty Sark," there is certainly much that is exaggerated, much intended to adorn the tale, though she was universally reported as in league with a certain dark conspirator. If not beautiful, she was doubtless powerful:—

" For mony a beast to dead she shot,
 And perished mony a bonny boat,
 And shook baith muckle corn and beer,
 And kept the countryside in fear."

Among the cantrips imputed to Kate Steen in the above list is one which is but imperfectly understood, if known at all, in the present day—"Mony a beast to dead she shot." What was the "shoot of dead?" It was a curse or denunciation of evil upon a living object, that bodily disease and death might speedily overtake it. And it was the popular belief in former days that if such an imprecation were made by any one, and especially by one reputed "no canny," it could not fail in producing the desired effect.

In the kirk-session records of the parish of Tinwald, Dumfriesshire, of date August, 1699, we find that the "shoot of dead" was a crime demanding more than ordinary church censure and discipline. A report having been laid before the session that "John Carruthers and Jean Wilson were scolding together, and that the said Jean *did imprecate him and his beasts*," they were cited to appear at next meeting, which they did accordingly, but "John declared it was not Jean Wilson (who was brought up by another party on a like charge), but Bessie Kennedy, who, upon a certain Sabbath, did wish

that his horse might *shoot to dead*—whereupon it fell sick, and he, bringing it home, and sitting at his house reading, the said Bessie Kennedy came by, and he telling her that his horse had not thriven since she cursed it, she wished that the *shoot of dead* might light on him and it both." Bessie was summoned and denied the charge; but acknowledged that when he told her his horse had eaten none since she cursed it, she replied that if the *shoot of dead* should come on him too, he might give her the blame. Bessie was found to have behaved unchristianly, was rebuked for the same and dismissed, after promising greater watchfulness for the future.

But witches, notwithstanding their cantrips, and charms, and incantations, are not invulnerable to the shafts of death; and however often they may have whiddled over the green knowes, in the form of some sturdy grey maukin', with shot after shot rattling in their rear, when death draws the trigger the aim is sure. So the time came when "Cutty's" mortal career drew to a close; and the presentiment she had of the day and hour of her decease contributed not a little to confirm the popular reputation of her weird character. One morning she sent for one of her neighbours and addressed him in the following terms:—"Noo, John, this is my hinmost day in this warl, and the mid-day hour and me will hae an unco struggle. Ye hae lang befriended me and mine, when few cared little how ill we fared. There's my meal barrel in the corner by; mony a time ye hae filled it, but I shall need it nae mair. Tak' it as a present, along with the bake-brod

and the bread-roller on the tap o't, and when I'm gane ye'll fin' a whisky bottle in the cupboard, wi' some bread and cheese in the same place. Mak' yersel's comfortable, and mourn na for me."

The meal barrel was a twenty-pint cask, which had seen considerable service of a different kind—the baking-board was a few staves of a similar vessel nailed together—and the bread-roller was a long-necked brandy bottle. Such were the humble gifts conveyed in the dying bequest of "Cutty Sark," and they were till lately in the possession of her friend John, who has followed his grateful neighbour over the unrepassable bourne, and who presented these relics of a wondrous character as a legacy to our informant.

One by one the morning hours crept wearily away, and exactly at the predicted time the lingering spirit of "Cutty Sark" departed to another scene. After the necessary obsequies had been performed by some female neighbours to the lifeless body, and the curtains had been drawn closely around, they sat down before the fire to refresh themselves, as directed, with the comforts of the cupboard, when, lo! ere the first morsel had been tasted or the cork drawn, down went the hearth and all upon it, while the whole party fled in terror to the door. After the consternation had been somewhat abated, one bolder than the rest ventured to look through the key-hole, in the fear lest another Alloway Kirk scene should be going on, but all was silent. With trembling hand she lifted the latch and looked in. The body was lying still in death upon the bed as when they left it, and the hearthstone had disappeared save

a single corner. They all returned and found that the cause of their terror was a large vault underneath the hearth, which had been used for the concealment of illicit spirits and other smuggled goods, and also for hiding renegades from the hand of justice. The stone had slidden off one of its end supports, and with its superincumbent load was precipitated below. With considerable difficulty the stone was raised, and set with earth from an adjoining field; the door was securely fastened, and a few days after the mortal remains of "Cutty Sark" were committed to the dust. Some time after the funeral it was found on entering the cottage that the floor surrounding the hearth was growing green, and bidding fair for a beautiful crop of grain. The earth with which the hearth was laid had been taken from a lately sown field. Though there was nothing very remarkable in this, yet it spread like wildfire with manifold exaggerations, and many a sigh of relief was drawn that Laighpark shieling was now without a tenant, and that Kate Steen would trouble the district no more. Poor woman! she never troubled it, but the superstitious fears of its inhabitants did. The troubler and the troubled, however, have long ere now passed equally away. The Maiden rocks still stand as before, a landmark to the passing sailor; but Shanter, Glenfoot, and Laighpark have long since been removed, and the inquisitive traveller, with difficulty and doubt, has pointed out to him the spots where they stood.