ALLOA CHURCH, AYRSHIRE.*

THIS church ſtands by the river, a ſmall diſtance from the bridge of Doon, on the road leading from Maybòle to Ayr. About a century ago it was united to the pariſh of Ayr; ſince which time it has fallen to

* This church is alſo famous for being the place wherein the witches and warlocks uſed to hold their infernal meetings, or ſabbaths, and prepare their magical unctions: here too they uſed to amuſe themſelves with dancing to the pipes of the muckle-horned Deel. Diverſe ſtories of theſe horrid rites are ſtill current; one of which my worthy friend Mr. Burns has here favoured me with in verſe.

TAM O' SHANTER. A TALE.

WHEN chapmen billies leave the ſtreet,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
And folk begin to tak the gate;
While we ſit bowſing at the nappy,
And gettin fou, and unco happy,
We think na on the long Scots miles,
The waters, moſſes, ſlaps and ſtyles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where ſits our ſulky, ſullen dame,
Gathering her brows, like gathering ſtorm,
Nurſing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honeſt Tom o'Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter:
(Auld Ayr, whom ne'er a town ſurpaſſes
For boneſt men and bonnie laſſes.)

O Tam! hadſt thou but been ſae wiſe
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel, thou was a ſkellum,
A bletherin, bluſterin, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was na ſober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou ſat as long as thou had ſiller
That every naig was ca'd a ſhoe on,
The ſmith and thee gat roarin fou on;
That at the L—d's houſe, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.—
She propheſied that, late or ſoon,
Thou wad be found deep-drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Aloway's old haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how mony counſels ſweet,
How mony lengthen'd ſage advices,
The buſband frae the wife deſpiſes!

But to our tale:——Ae market-night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Faſt by an ingle bleezing finely,
Wi' reamin ſwats that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, ſouter Johnie,
His ancient, truſty, drouthy cronie;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither,
They had been fou for weeks tegither.—
The night drave on wi' ſangs and elatter,
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
With favors 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 himſelf amang the nappy:
As hees 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 flower, 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;

to ruins. It is one of the eldeſt pariſhes in Scotland, and ſtill retains theſe privileges: the miniſter of Ayr is obliged to marry and baptiſe in it, and alſo here to hold his parochial catechiſings. The magiſtrates attempted,

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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 ſhowers 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 meare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam ſkelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Deſpiſing wind, and rain, and fire:
Whyles holding faſt his gude blue bonnet;
Whyles crooning o'er an auld Scots ſonnet;
Whyles glowring round wi' prudent cares,
Leſt bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Aloway was drawing nigh,
Where ghaiſts and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was croſs the ford,
Where in the ſnaw the chapman ſmoor'd;
And paſt the birks and meikle ſtane,
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the tree, aboon the well,
Where Mungo's mither hang'd herſel:
Before him, Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling ſtorm roars thro' the woods;
The light'nings flaſh from pole to pole;
Near, and more near, the thunders roll;
When, glimmering thro' groaning trees,
Kirk-Aloway 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' tippeny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' uſquebae, we'll face the devil!
The ſwats ſae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair-play, he car'd na deils a boddle:
But Maggy ſtood, right fair aſtoniſh'd,
Till by the heel and hand admoniſh'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light,
And, wow! Tam ſaw an unco ſight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance,
Nae cotillon 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 deeviliſh cantrain 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, unchirſten'd bairns;
A thief, new cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his laſt gaſp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blood 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 of life bereft,
The grey hairs yet ſtak to the heft:
Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',
That even to name wad be unlawfu':—
Three lawyers' tongues, turn'd inſide out,
Wi' lies ſeam'd like a beggar's clout;
Three prieſts' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay ſtinking, vile, in every neuk.

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 ſtew;

They

+ Burns left out these four lines at my desire, as being incongruous with the other circumstances of pure horror.

attempted, ſome time ago, to take away the bell; but were repulſed by the Alloites, *vi & armis*.

They reel'd, they ſet, they croſs'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka Carlin ſwat and reekit,
And cooſt her duddies on the wark,
And linket at it in her ſark.—

Now Tam! O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and ſtrappin in their teens!
Their ſarks, inſtead o' creeſhie ſtainen,
Been ſnaw-white, ſeventeen-hunder linen;
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were pluſh o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gien them off my hurdies
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!
But withered beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad ſpean a foal,
Loupin and ſlingin on a crumock,
I wonder did na turn thy ſtomach.—

But Tam kend what was what ſu' 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 thought thy reverend graunie,
That ſark ſhe coſt for her wee Nannie
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches)
Should ever grac'd a dance o' witches!

But here my Muſe her wing maun cour,
Sic ſtights are far beyond her power;
To ſing how Nannie lap and ſlang,
(A ſouple jad 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 loſt 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 ſyke,
When plundering herds aſſail their byke;
As open puſſie's mortal foes,
When, pop, ſhe ſtarts before their noſe;
As eager rins the market-croud,
When "catch the thief!" reſounds aloud;
So Maggy rins, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch ſhout and hollo.—

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 o' the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toſs,
A running ſtream they dare na 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 Maggy preſt,
And ſlew at Tam with furious ettle,
But little kend ſhe Maggy'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 Maggy 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 rin in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear;
Remember TAM O' SHANTER'S MEARE!

CROS-