

Halloween: The following poem 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 its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more unenlightened in our own.-R.B.

Upon that night, when fairies light
 On Cassilis Downans dance,
 Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
 On sprightly coursers prance;
 Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,
 Beneath the moon's pale beams;
 There, up the Cove, to stray an' rove,
 Amang the rocks and streams
 To sport that night;

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.

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 sae trig, wi' wooer-babs
 Weel-knotted on their garten;
 Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs
 Gar lasses' hearts gang startin
 Whiles fast at night.

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

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

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
 They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
 The vera wee-things, toddlin, rin,
 Wi' stocks out owre their shouter:
 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 lie that night.

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

But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
 Behint the muckle thorn:
 He grippit Nelly hard and fast:
 Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
 But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
 Whan kiutlin in the fause-house
 Wi' him that night.

The auld guid-wife's weel-hoordit nits
 Are round an' round dividend,
 An' mony lads an' lasses' fates
 Are there that night decided:
 Some kindle couthie side by side,
 And burn thegither trimly;
 Some start awa wi' saucy pride,
 An' jump out owre the chimlie
 Fu' high that night.

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 sair heart
 To see't that night.

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, and swore by jing,
 'Twas just the way he wanted
 To be that night.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
 She pits hersel an' Rob in;
 In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
 Till white in ase they're sobbin:
 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.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
 Her thoughts on Andrew Bell:
 She lea'es them gashin at their cracks,
 An' slips out-by hersel';
 She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
 An' for the kiln she goes then,
 An' darklins grapit for the bauks,
 And in the blue-clue throws then,
 Right fear't that night.

An' ay she win't, an' ay she swat-
 I wat she made nae jaukin;
 Till something held within the pat,
 Good Lord! 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.

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,
 "Will ye go wi' me, graunie?
 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 sae vap'rin,
 She notic't na an aizle brunt
 Her braw, new, worset apron
 Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
 I daur you try sic sportin,
 As seek the foul thief ony place,
 For him to spae your fortune:
 Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
 Great cause ye hae to fear it;
 For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
 An' liv'd an' died deleerit,
 On sic a night.

"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' eye a rantin kirn we gat,
 An' just on Halloween
 It fell that night.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
 A clever, sturdy fallow;
 His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
 That lived in Achmacalla:
 He gat hemp-seed, I mind it weel,
 An' he made unco light o't;
 But mony a day was by himsel',
 He was sae sairly frightened
 That vera night."

Then up gat fechtin Jamie Fleck,
 An' he swoor by his conscience,
 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.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
 Tho' he was something sturtin;
 The graip he for a harrow taks,
 An' hauls at his curpin:
 And ev'ry now an' then, he says,
 "Hemp-seed I saw thee,
 An' her that is to be my lass
 Come after me, an' draw thee
 As fast this night."

He wistl'd up Lord Lennox' March
 To keep his courage cherry;
 Altho' his hair began to arch,
 He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
 Till presently he hears a squeak,
 An' then a grane an' gruntle;
 He by his shouther gae a keek,
 An' tumbled wi' a wintle

Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
 In dreadfu' desperation!
 An' young an' auld come rinnin out,
 An' hear the sad narration:
 He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
 Or crouchie Merran Humphie-
 Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
 And wha was it but grumhie
 Asteer that night!

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 cheekit apples,
 To watch, while for the barn she sets,
 In hopes to see Tam Kipples
 That vera night.

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

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair 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, grousome carlin;
 An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
 Till skin in blypes cam haurlin
 Aff's nieves that night.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
 As cantie as a kittlen;
 But och! that night, amang the shaws,
 She gat a fearfu' settlin!
 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.

Whiles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
 Whiles round a rocky scar it strays,
 Whiles in a wiel it dimpl't;
 Whiles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
 Wi' bickerin', dancin' dazzle;
 Whiles cookit undeneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazel
 Unseen that night.

Amang the brachens, on the brae,
 Between her an' the moon,
 The deil, or else an outler quey,
 Gat up an' ga'e a croon:
 Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;

Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The luggies three are ranged;
An' ev'ry time great care is ta'en
To see them duly 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.

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