

THE  
HERD'S GHAIST;  
OR, THE  
PERJURED LAIRD'S DOOM.

A LEGEND OF THE AULD KIRK O' PERT.

*TO WHICH IS ADDED*

NANCY BEAN—A SKETCH.



THE AULD KIRK O' PERT.

PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

## THE HERD'S GHAIST.

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**THE** following Scottish ballad illustrates a tradition having reference to the parish of Pert, now united to that of Logy, in the north-eastern part of Forfarshire; and also embodies some superstitions of the same locality, with respect to the supposed power of conjuring or laying ghosts. It is however becoming obsolete by the removal of many of the old families of the district, and ere long may possibly pass out of memory. By some of the older folks the tale is thus narrated:—A simple herd-boy having excited the ire of the laird of Pert, the latter, a powerful man, flung the unconscious victim of his anger among a cairn of stones, and thereby killed him on the spot. The circumstances having caused judicial inquiry, the laird, to exculpate himself, charged one of his own hinds with the perpetration of the murder, for which, in those days when "night was right," the poor man was hanged. The fact was however traditionally transmitted, and the particulars, as related in the ballad, obtained a general belief among the peasantry, viz., that, till the conjurations of the miller, the boy had wandered under the murky cloud of night, between the kirk of Pert, and an old ford in the river below the North-water bridge.

The old kirk of Pert, so prominent in the ballad, is now a picturesque ruin upon the banks of the North

Eak, not unlike that of "auld haunted" Alloway on the  
 Doon, eternised by Robert Burns. The locality has  
 otherwise many attractions, both historical and literary.  
 A few paces south of the Upper North-water bridge,  
 was born in a humble cottage, James Mill, the historian  
 of British India, father of the late J. S. Mill, M. P., the  
 celebrated political economist; while the bridge itself,  
 which was built by Superintendant Erskine of Dun,  
 was used as a resting place or prison, for the Cove-  
 nanters when on their way from the South of Scotland  
 to Dunnottar Castle, in 1685.

When'er the gowden sun gade doun,  
 An' gloomie ev'nin' fell;  
 Frae a fireless flame of azure hue,  
 By foot o' Pert's kirke bell;

Ane winsome boy there wont to come,  
 With slae black eyne an' hair;  
 His cheiks an' lips were deadlie pale,  
 An' head an' feet were bare.

Thoch lang atween the kirke an' furde,  
 This sprite a-wanderin' went,  
 Nae livin' either heard its tale,  
 Or cause o' mourning kent.

But ae dark nichte 's ane miller chiel'  
 Had langst the road to gae,  
 The lad kept rinnin' by his side,  
 Lamentin' o'er his wae

An' when they reach'd the kirkeyard style,  
He cry'd—"O list to me;  
An' 'set ane harmless murdert boy,  
Frae lanelie wand'rin' free!"

The sturdie miller aft heard tell  
That sic a sprite was seen;  
Thoch laith to bide ane ghashtlie ca',  
At last he's courage ta'en,

An' 'bout himsell wi' hazell staff,  
He made ane roundlie score;  
Then said—"My lad, in name o' Gude,\*  
What doe ye wander for?"

The laddie ga'e ane eldritch screech—  
Ane wulsome look an' bauld;  
An' aye's he spak the thunder roll'd,  
An' fire-flauchs ne'er devaul'd.

"There, there's the cairn!" the laddie scream'd,  
"Whare life was ta'en frae me;  
For whilk ane guiltless hireman died  
He on yon wither'd tree—  
Whase life the murd'rer swore awa,  
To save's ain infamie:

\* In the art of "laying ghaists," this is ever an important precautionary proceeding, because it is superstitiously believed, that if the conjuror describe the circle in the name of the Deity, no spirit can enter it; but, if that particular be neglected, the circle is made in vain, and there are then a thousand to one chances o' his being attacked by the spirit, and deprived of life!

"But ho!" mair shrillie cried the boy,  
 With eye on lordlie grave;  
 "Come forth thou perjur'd laird o' Pert,  
 Thy name it winna save!

"Not all thy gifts to hallie kirke,  
 Or alms thou didst bestow,  
 Will lay the clouds o' sin an' shame  
 That round thy mem'ric flow!"

On this ane grizzlie form appear'd,  
 An' frae the kirke wa' hied—  
 "Ah! there's the murd'rous laird o' Pert!"  
 The laddie tremblin' cried.

The hoarie sprite was wate, an' fain  
 Wad flown to whence it came;  
 But aye's it near'd the darksome grave,  
 There rose a smoth'rin' flame;

An' by that flame, frae hallie kirk  
 The laird's rich gifts were thrown;  
 While sprites of ancient kith an' kin,  
 Thus sang in wae fu' tone—

"Sin' Hear'n denies thee an' thy wealth,  
 Sae surelie too shall we:  
 For thoch thou be our ain brither,  
 We hate all perjurie!

"An' frae our fam'lic tomb for aye,  
 Thy name it shall be ta'en;

An' but in page of blude an' shame,  
 Nae trace o' thee'll be seen!"  
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Bereft of friends, an' hopes of peace,  
 With grief the laird was pain'd;  
 His sprite flew here, an' then flew there,  
 But peace it ne'er obtain'd;

Till frae the Esk ane frichtsme fiend,  
 With joyful clamour flies;  
 An' fondly graspt the Laird, as gin  
 He'd been its weddit prize!

An' just's they fled, a siller cloud  
 Drew round the guiltless boy,  
 That bore him frae this land of woe;  
 To shades of heav'nlie joy!

#### NANCY BEAN.—A SKETCH.

"IN yon little cot by the Borrowstown hill,  
 Where flutters the merlin an' wimples the rill,  
 Where sweet crystal waters peep out now and then  
 Among the red heather, an' rocks o' the glen.  
 Out ower frae a' neebours, an' pleas'd wi' her fa',  
 By shade o' the bourtree, an' bloom o' the haw,  
 Sits smilin' an' spinnin' frae mornin' to e'en,  
 The bonniest lassie I ever ha'e seen!

I'd cheerfully wander o'er mountain an' plain,—  
 Wad face our bauld faes by the land or the main,  
 Or toil wi' the slaves that are far o'er the sea,  
 Gin that bonnie lassie wad smile upo' me!"

"Weel, weel, do I ken her;—it's sweet Nancy  
 Bean!

A lassie whase beauties are no easy seen—  
 For, like a fine beuk, or a picture sae rare,  
 The aft'ner you see her, ye'll love her the mair.  
 But whate'er ye think o'er ye never should tell,  
 An' like a wis man keep your thochts to yersel';  
 Nor trust to a frien', tho' he vow that he's sae,  
 For nearest o' kin aften proves the warst fae.  
 Just quietly gang doun i' the gloamin' sae gray,  
 An' speak o'er the news ye ha'e heard thro' the day—  
 O'er weddin's an' births that ha'e been i' the glen:  
 An' if you're made welcome—let naebody ken!  
 Smile aye as ye crack o'er the jokes that you tell,  
 But never ance speak o' your neebours or sel';  
 An' mak your tales short, an' as queer as you may—  
 Ye'll aiblins be lucky—there's nae ane can say!

I've ken'd Nancy lang, an' her mither an' a',  
 On whom, could she help it, the blast wadna blaw;  
 She toils late an' early to comfort her days—  
 To humour her freaks, an' her auld-fashion'd ways.  
 On Sabbaths, I'm sure, 'twad delight you to see  
 How kindly an' slowly they wind o'er the lea,  
 Among the wild brakens, an' down by the Dean  
 Where stands the auld kirk i' the meadow sae  
 green—

Around whose brown wa's their forefathers repose,  
 Whose half-buried tombs their quiet actions  
 disclose—

Where neebours forgather, and news hear an' tell,  
 Till conven'd i' the kirk by the toll o' the bell.  
 You'll see Nancy there in blue winsey hame-made,  
 Her mither in poplin, an' braw scarlet plaid;  
 A lesson, I-trow, for yon dame at Drumlin,  
 Wha brags an' abuses her neebours an' kin,  
 An' flees, like a lady, the hail kintra throw,  
 While her poor mither lives—we daurna say *how*!  
 But Nancy was train'd up in Modesty's ways,  
 And in paths little kent to the young now-a-days,  
 Where Truth an' Religion are sweetly combin'd,  
 As guides to our actions, an' lights to our mind!

Should Nancy be frank, as I doubtna she'll be—  
 (But that ye may guess by the glance o' her e'e),  
 You should aften gae inwith, an' speir how she  
 fens—

Ye'll aiblins be lucky—there's naebody kens!  
 Speak aft to her mither in praise o' the days  
 She herdit an' sang 'mang the green cover'd braes,  
 For, as youngsters delight i' the warld to shine,  
 Auld folks smile an' wonder o'er days o' langsyne.  
 Sae, Jamie, be tentie, be honest, an' kind,  
 An' do what you can to win Nancy's sweet mind,  
 For it's weel worth your trouble; an' this I can  
 tell—

*Gin I were a wanter, I'd court her mysel'!"*