

THRUMMY CAP,

A TALE;

AND

THE BROWNIE O' FEARNDEN,

A BALLAD.

"O happy ! when the gloamin'-fa',

Convenes the canty 'Farmer's Ha';

Wi' tales an' ballads, sings an' a'—

O happy then !

The winter evenin' stéals awa'

Till *nine* or *tén*."

BRECHIN :

ALEXANDER BLACK BOOKSELLER,

MDCCCXXXIX.

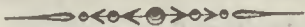
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THE THRUMMY CAP
A CASE
THE BROWNE OF MARRIS
Extract from the Montrose Chronicle, Feb. 3, 182

“WHEN we mentioned a fortnight ago, that a man had found dead among the snow near Portleathen, we were not that it was John Burness, the author of the popular little poem *Thrummy Cap*. He was a native of the parish of Glenbervie, cardineshire, and was born May 23, 1771. He was many years private in the Forfar Militia; and although not much esteemed a soldier, yet, as *Burness the Poet*, he was loved by the whole regiment—officers and men. For sometime previous to his death he was employed as a traveller for a Periodical Publishing Company in Aberdeen; and in that capacity was well known over the counties of Angus and Mearns. He has left, we understand, a wide family in Stonehaven; and we are farther informed, that in contemplation to erect a monument over his grave, to mark the place where rest the ashes of the humble and honest bard.”

THRUMMY CAP;

A TALE.



In ancient times, far in the north,
A hundred miles ayont the Forth,
Upon a stormy winter's day,
Twa men forgather'd by the way ;
An' as they had some piece to gang,
To keep the time frae seeming lang,
They did agree to gang thegither,
As company to ane anither.

Ane was a sturdy bardoeh chiel,
An' frae the weather happit weel
Wi' a mill'd plaiden jockey coat ;
An' eke, he on his head had got
A Thrummy Cap, baith large an' stout,
Wi' flaps ahint (as weel's a snout),
Whilk button'd close aneath his chin.
To keep the cauld frae cummin' in.

Upon his legs he had gamashes,
Which sogers ca' their spatterdashes ;
An' on his hands, instead o' glo'as,
Large doddy mittens, whilk he'd roose

For warmness ; an' an aiken stick

Nae vera lang, but gay an' thick,

Intil his his neive ; he drove awa,

An' car'd for neither frost nor sna'.

The tither was just the reverse,

O' claise an' courage baith was scarce ;

Sae in our tale as we go on,

I think we'll ca' him Cow'rdly John,

As he that spirit aft did show,

As in the sequel you will know.

Sae on they gaed at a good scour,

'Cause that they saw a gatherin' show'r

Grow very thick upo' the wind,

Whilk to their wae they soon did find

An awfu' show'r o' sna' and drift,

As ever dang down frae the lift ;

Right wild an' monstrous Boreas roar'd.

Preserves ! quo' John, we'll baith be smoor'd

Our tryst's end we can ne'er mak out.

Cheer up, quo' Thrummy, never doubt,

But I'm some fley'd we've tint our way,

Howe'er at the neist house we'll stay

Until we see gin it grows fair ;

Gin no, a' night we'll tarry there.

Weel, weel, says Johnny we sall try—
 Syne they a mansion-house did spy
 Upo' the road, a bit afore,
 Sae up they gaed into the door,
 Whare Thrummy chapit wi' his stick,
 Syne to the door cam vera quick
 A muckle dog, wha barkit sair ;
 But Thrummy for him dinnā care,
 But handled weel his aiken staff,
 In spite o's teeth he keep't him aff,
 Until the landlord cam to see
 An' ken what might the matter be ;
 Whan verra soon the dog did cease,
 The landlord he did spier the case.
 Quo Thrummy, Sir, we ha'e gaen will,
 We thought we'd ne'er a house get till ;
 We near were smor'd amang the drift,
 An sae guidman ye'll mak a shift
 To gie us quarters a' this night,
 For now we dinna hae day-light,
 Farer to gang, though it were fair ;
 Sae gin ye hae a bed to spare,
 Whate'er ye charge we sanna grudge,
 An' satisfie you e'er we budge

To gang awa, and when 'tis day
Will pack our awls an' tak our way.

The landlord says, " O beds we've nane,
" Our ain fouk they will scarce contain ;
" But gin ye gang but twa miles forat,
" Aside the kirk dwals Robby Dorat,
" wha keeps a change, an' sells guid drink,
" His house ye may mak out I think."

Quo' Thrummy that's owre far awa,
The roads are sae blawn up wi' snaw,
To mak it, is nae in our power,
For look ye, sic a dismal shower
Is comin' on; ye'll lat us bide,
Though we sude sit at your fire-side.
The landlord says to him, " na, na,
" I canna keep you here ava ;
" Shamp aff, it is nae worth your while
" To hyde, fan ye hae scrimp twa mile
" To gang ; sae quickly aff ye'll steer,
" For faith I doubt ye's nae be here."

Twā mile, quo Thrummy deil speed me
If frae your house this night I gae ;
Are we to starve in Christain land,
As lang as my stick bides i' my hand,

An' siller plenty i' my pouch?
 To nane about this house I'll crouch;
 Come John, lat's in, We'll tak a seat,
 F at sorrow gars you look sae blate—
 Sae in he gaes, an' sets him down,
 Says he, they're nae about your town
 Sall put me out till a new day,
 As lang's I've siller for to pay.

The landlord says ye're rather rash,
 To turn you out we sanna fash,
 Since ye're sae positive to bide,
 But troth, ye'll sit by the fire-side.
 I tald you ance, o' beds I've nane
 Unoccupied, except bare ane;
 In it, I dread, ye winna ly,
 For stoutest hearts ha'e aft been shy
 To venture in within the room
 After the night begins to gloom;
 It's haunted by a frightfu' ghaist,
 Oursel'es are terrified amaist
 T o bide about the town a' night,
 Sae ye may chance to get a sight,
 Like that whilk some o' our folks saw—
 Far better till ye gang awa,

Or else ye'll maybe rue e'er day,
 Guid faith, quo' John, I'm thinking sae,
 Better intil the neuk to sit,
 Than fley'd, guid keeps ! out o' our wit,
 The Lord preserve me frae a' evil,
 I widna like to see the Devil,
 Whisht ! gouk, quo' Thrummy, had your peace,
 That sanna gar me leave this place ;
 To grit or sma' I ne'er did ill,
 Nae ghaist or deil my rest shall spill,
 Landlord, gin ye'll mak up that bed,
 I promise I'll be vera glad,
 Intil the same a' night to ly,
 Gin that the room be warm and' dry.

The landlord says, ye'se get a fire
 An' candle too, gin ye desire,
 Wi' beuks to read, an' for your bed
 I'll orders gie to get it made.

John says as I'm a Christain man,
 Wha never lik'd to curse nor ban,
 Nor steal, nor lie, nor drink nor whore,
 I'll never gang within the door,
 But stay by the fire-side a' night,
 An' gang awa' whane'er 'tis light.

Says Thrummy till him wi' a glowr
 Ye cowardly gouk—i'll mak ye cour!
 Come ye up stairs alang wi' me,
 An' I sall cation for you be,
 For I defy the muckle deil,
 An' a' his warks I wat fu' weel;
 Fat tarry then maks you sae eery
 Fling by your fears an' come be cheery.
 Syne Johnny faintly gae consent,
 An' up the stair they quickly went,
 Whare soon they gat baith fire and light,
 To had them hearty a' the night;
 The landlord likewise gae them meat
 As muckle as they weel cou'd eat,
 Shaw'd them their bed, and bade them gang
 Till it, whene'er they did think lang;
 Sae wishing them a good repose,
 Straight then to his ain bed he goes.

Our travellers now being left alane,
 'Cause that the frost was nippin' keen,
 Coost aff their shoon an' warm't their feet,
 An' syne gade to their bed to sleep;
 But cow'rldy John wi' fear was quakin',
 He coudna sleep but still lay wakin'.

Sae troubled wi' his pannic fright.
 When near the twalt hour o' the night,
 That Thrummy waken't, and thus spoke ;
 Preserve's quo' he, I'm like to choke
 Wi' thirst, an' I maun ha'e a drink ;
 I will gae down the stair I think,
 An' grapple for the water-pail ;
 O for a waught o' caller ale !
 But Johnny says to him, na, na,
 I winna let you gang awa ;
 Wow ! will ye gang an' leave me here
 My lane, to die wi' perfect fear ?
 Rise an' gae wi' me then, quo' Thrummy.
 Ye senseless guid for naething bummy
 I'm only gaun to seek some water,
 An' I'll be back just in a clatter.
 Na, na, says John, I'll rather ly,
 But as I'm likewise something dry,
 Gin ye can get a jug or cap,
 Fetch up to me a little drap.
 Aye, aye, says Thrummy, that I will,
 Although you sudna get a gill.
 Sae down he gaes to seek a drink,
 An' syne he thinks he sees a blink

O' light that shone upo' the floor,
Out through the key-hole o' a door,
Whilk was nae fast, but stood ajee ;
Whatever's there he thinks he'll see.
He bauldy o'er the threshold ventures,
An' in within the cellar enters ;
But reader, judge o' his surprise,
When there he saw, with wond'ring eyes,
A spacious vault, weel filled wi' casks
O' reamin' ale, an' some big flasks,
An' strideleg o'er a cask o' ale,
He saw the likeness o' himsel',
Just i' the dress that he coost aff ;
A thrummy cap, an' aikin staff.
Gamashes and a jockey coat,
An' in his hand the ghaist had got
A big four luggit timmer bicker,
Fill'd to the brim wi' reamin' liquor.
Our hero at the spectre star'd,
But neither daunted was nor fear'd ;
He to the ghaist straight up did step,
An' says, dear brother Thrummy Cap,
The warst ye surely dinna drink ;
I'll try the same o' yours I think ;

Syne taks a jug, pu's out the pail,
 An' fills it up o' the same ale
 Frae under where the spectre sat,
 An' up the stair wi' it he gat,
 Took a guid drink, gied John anither,
 But never tald him o' his brither
 That he into the cellar saw.
 Mair than he'd naething seen ava,
 Right brown and nappy was the beer—
 Whare he did get it, John did spier.
 Says he, I'm sure ye needna care;
 I'll gae an' see to get some mair.
 Sae down the stair again he goes
 To get a drink, anither dose;
 Being positive to hae some mair,
 But still he found the ghaist was there.
 Now on a butt, behind the door,
 Says he, you did nae ill afore,
 Dear brither 'Thrummy, sae I'll try
 You ances again, because I'm dry;
 Syne fills his jug right out below,
 An' up the stair again does go.
 John marvell'd sair, but didna spier
 Again where he had got the beer—

For this was stronger than the first—
 Sae they baith drank till like to burst,
 An' syne composed themsells to rest,
 To sleep a while they judg'd it best,
 An hour in bed they hadna been,
 An scarcely weel had clos'd their een,
 Whan just into the neighbouring chamber
 They heard a dreadful din an' clamour;
 Aneath the bed-claise John did cower,
 But Thrummy jump't upo' the floor,
 Him by the sark-tail John did haud;
 Ly still, quo' he, fat! are ye mad?
 Thrummy then turn'd him round about,
 An' lent John in the ribs a clout,
 Till on the bed he tumbled down,
 In little better than a swoon;
 While Thrummy, fast as he could rin,
 Gaed aff to see what made the din:
 The chamber seem'd to him as light
 As if the sun was shinning bright;
 The ghaist was standing near the door,
 In the same dress it had before,
 An' o'er anent it, at the wa',
 Were ither apparitions twa—

These spirits seemed to kick a ba',
 The ghaist against the ither twa ;
 Whilk close they drove, baith back an' fore,
 Atween the chimla an' the door.
 Thrummy awhile beheld the play ;
 Syne running up, he thus did say :
 " Ane for ane may weel compare,
 " But twa for ane is rather sair ;
 " The play's nae equal, sae I vow,
 " Dear brither Thrummy, I'll help you."
 Syne wi' his foot he kick'd the ba',
 Gard her play stot against the wa' ;
 Quick then, as light'ning frae the sky,
 The spectres gae a horrid cry,
 An' vanish'd wi' a clap o' thunner,
 While Thrummy at the same did wonner.
 The room was quiet now an' mirk,
 An' Thrummy stilping in his sark ;
 Glamping the gate back till his bed,
 He thinks he hears a person tread,
 An' ere he gat within the door,
 The ghaist again stood him before ;
 Straight up afore him it did stand
 Wi' a large candle in its hand.

Quo' Thrummy, friend, I want to know
 What brings you frae the shades below,
 I, in my maker's name, command,
 Ye'll tell your story just aff hand,
 What wad ye hae? I'll do my best
 For you, to let you be at rest

Then says the ghaist, 'tis forty year
 Sin I've been doom'd to wander here;
 In a' that time, there has been none
 Behav'd sae bold as you ha'e done;
 Sae if ye'll do a job for me,
 Disturbance mair I'll never gi'e.

Say on your tale, quo' Thrummy, I
 To gi'e you justice, sure will try.
 Then mark me weel, the ghaist reply'd,
 An' you shall soon be satisfie'd.
 Frae this aback, near fifty year,
 I o' this place was overseer,
 Whan this laird's father had the land,
 A' thing was then at my command,
 Wi' power to do as I thought fit,
 In ilka cause I chief did sit;
 The laird paid great respect to me,
 But I an ill return did gie;

The title deeds o' his estate,
 Out o' the same I did him cheat;
 I staw them frae where they did lye,
 Some days afore the laird did die—
 His son at that time was in France,
 An' sae I thought I'd hae some chance,
 Gif he should never come again,
 That the estate would be my ain.
 But scarcely three bare weeks were past,
 When death did come an' grip me fast,
 Sae sudden that I had nae power
 The charter back for to restore.
 Soon after that hame cam the heir,
 An' syne gat up the refu' rair,
 What sorrow was come o' the rights.
 He sought them several days and nights;
 But never yet ha'e they been seen,
 As I aneath a muckle stane
 Did hide them i' this chamber wa',
 Weel sew'd up in a leather ba',
 But I was ne'er allow'd to rest,
 Until that I the same confest;
 But this to do, I had nae power
 Frae yon time to this vera hour;

But I've reveal'd it a' to you,
 An' now I'll tell you what to do,
 Till nae langsyne, nae mony kent
 That this same laird the rights did want;
 But now they hae him at the law,
 An' the neist ouk the laird maun shaw,
 Afore the court the rights o's land—
 This pits him till an unco stand;
 For gif he disna shaw them there,
 O' a' his lands he'll be stript bare;
 Nae hope has he to save's estate;
 This maks him sour and unco blate,
 He canna think whare's rights may be
 An' ne'er expects them mair to see.
 But now, my friend, mark what I tell,
 An' ye'll get something to yoursel':
 Tak out that stane there i' the wa,
 An' then you'll get the leather ba',
 Its just the same that you did see,
 When you said that ye wad help me—
 The rights are sew'd up in its heart,
 But see ye dinna wi' them part,
 Until the laird sall pay you down
 Just fifty guineas an' a crown,

Whilk at my death was due to me;
 This for thy trouble I'll gie thee,
 An' I'll disturb this house nae mair,
 Cause I'll be free frae a' my care.
 This Thrummy promised to do,
 An' syne the ghaist bade him adieu,
 An' vanish't wi' a pleasant sound
 Down through the laft an' through the ground.

Thrummy gaed back syne till his bed,
 An' cowardly John was very glad,
 That he his neighbour saw ance mair,
 For o' his life he did despair.
 Wow man ! quo' he, where ha'e you been ?
 Come tell me a' fat ye hae seen ?
 Na, bide, says Thrummy, till day-light,
 I'll tell you syne baith clear an' right.
 Sae down they lay an' took a nap,
 Until the ninth hour it did chap.
 Whan John was sleeping, Thrummy raise,
 An' to the chamber aff he gaes,
 Taks out the stane out o' the wa',
 An' soon he fand the leather ba',
 Took out the rights, replac'd the stane,
 Ere John kend weel whare he had been ;

Syne baith cam stepping down the stair,
The morning now was calm an' fair.

Weel, says the laird, my trusty frien',
Ha'e ye ought i' your chamber seen?

Quo' Thrummy, Sir, I naething saw,
That did me ony ill ava.

Weel, quo' the laird, ye now may gang,
Ye ken the day's nae very lang,

I' the mean time 'tis calm an clear,
Ye lose your time in biding here.

Quo' Thrummy, Sir, mark what I tell,
I've mair right here than you yoursell,

Sae till I like, I here shall bide.

The Laird at this began to chide ;

Says he, my friend, ye're turnin' rude ;

Quo' Thrummy, I'll my claim mak' guid ,

For I, just here afore you a',

The rights o' this estate can shaw,

An' that is mair than ye can do.

What ! quo the laird, can that be true ?

'Tis true, quo' Thrummy look an' see,

D'ye think that I wad tell a lie ?

The papers frae his pouch then drew,

An' down upo' the table threw.

The laird at this up to him ran,
 An' cry'd, whare did you get them, man?
 Syne Thrummy tald him a' the tale,
 As I've tald you baith clear an' hale;
 The laird at this was fidgin' fain,
 That he wad get his rights again,
 An' fifty guineas down did tell,
 Besides a present frae himsell.
 Thrummy him thank't an' then the gowd
 Until a muckle purse he stow'd,
 An' crammed it in his oxter pouch,
 An' syne sought out his aiken crutch,
 Says, fare ye weel, I maun awa,
 An' see gin I get thro' the sna'.
 Weel fare ye weel, replied the laird,
 But how comes it ye hinna shar'd
 Or gi'en your neighbour o' the money?
 Na! by my saul I, Sir, quo' Thrummy,
 Whan I this siller sair did win,
 To haud in this wad be a sin.
 Afore that I the ghaist had laid,
 The nasty beast had s---t the bed:
 An' sae my tale I here do end,
 I hope no one it will offend;

My Muse will nae assist me langer;
 The dorty jad sometimes does anger;
 I thought her ance a gay smart lass;
 But now she's come till sic a pass,
 That a' my cudgelling an' whipping,
 Will hardly wake her out o' sleeping;
 To plague her mair I winna try,
 But dight my pen an' lay it by.

THE BROWNIE O' FEARNDEN.

ONCE MORE THE BROWNIE SHEWS HIS HONEST FACE."

The Brownie is supposed to have been a descendant of the **LARILIARIS** of Greece, as he generally attached himself to some culular family, whom he faithfully served every night by performing any laborious task which he thought would be acceptable. The day time he always retired to some ruinous castle, unfretted church, or solitary den or valley in the neighbourhood; and disinterested was his attachment, that any offer of reward, partly of food or clothing, he invariably reckoned a hint from the lady that they wished to dispense with his services, which he immediately transferred to another. He has likewise been known to don a beloved haunt, when often surprised in his places of daily resort, or when any particular observations were made on his appearance, which was "meagre, shaggy, and wild." It is therefore very probable, as we have no later tradition concerning the Brownie of the following ballad, that the questions put to him by the **SAGE FEMME** at the door of the farm house, occasioned his departure from his favourite Fearn den for ever.

THERE liv'd a man on Noranside,
 When Jamie held his ain;
 He had a mailen fair an' wide,
 An' servants nine or ten.

He had a servant dwellin' near,
 Worth a' his maids and men—
 This was the Brownie ye maun trow,
 Wha won'd in Fearnden.

When there was ony corn to thrash,
 Or ony byres to clean,
 He never mindit mickle fash,
 Or toilin' on his lane.
 An' tho' the snaw was ne'er sae deep
 He skippit thro' the glen,
 An' ran an errand in a wheep,
 The Brownie o' Fearnden.

Ae night the guidwife o' the house
 Fell sick, an' like to dee ;
 An' for a cannie mammie-wife,
 She wantit them to gae.
 The night was dark and ne'er a spark
 Wad venture through the glen,
 For fear he should wi' Brownie meet.
 In drearie Fearnden.

But Brownie stood behind the door,
 An' heard of a' the strife ;
 He saw tho' there was fouth o' men,
 They sune wad tine the wife.

He aff an' mounts the fleetest mare'
 An' thro' the wind and rain ;
 And soon he wan the mammie-wife's,
 Wha won'd ayont the den.

He chappit loudlie at the door,
 Crying, " Mak ye haste an' rise,
 Put on your claise, an' come wi' me,
 An' tak ye nae surprise.
 Put on your ridin' hude o' grey,
 To hap you frae the rain ;"
 " O whaur am I gaun," quo' the wife ;
 " O whar but thro' the den."

Whan baith were mountit on the mare,
 An' passin' thro' the glen—
 " O wat ye laddie," said the wife,
 " Gin he be near the den !
 Are we come near the den," she said ;
 " Tush, wisht you feul !" quo' he,
 For waur na ye hae i' your arms
 This night ye winna see."

They sune waur landit at the door,
 The wife he handit down—
 " I've left the house but ae hauf hour,
 I am a clever loun"—

“ What makes your feet sae braid ?” quo’ she

“ What makes your een sae wan ?”

“ I’ve wander’d monie a wearie foot,

An’ drearie sights I’ve seen !”

“ But mind the wife an’ mind the wean,

An’ see that a’ gae right ;

An’ I wil take you hame agen,

Afore the mornin’ light.

An’ gin they spier wha brought you here,

’Cause they were scant o’ men,

E’en tell them that ye rade ahint

The Brownie o’ Fearnden !”

When he had said these words, the wife

—

“ O wae ye lad ! FINIS the wife

“ Gin he be near the door !”

“ Gin he be near the door,” she said ;

“ That’s wae ye lad !” quo’ he

For wae ye lad ! ye hae your arms

— This night ye winna see.”

They sang war sangs at the door,

— The wife he had the door—

— I’ve left the house but ye hae not

— I hae never seen—