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TORONTO

However, juist as he got opposite the church he saw a light in the window and naething wad dae him but he must gae an' have a look. What he saw was a caution tae toppers. There was ony number o' witches dancin' and tearin' aroond, wi' Auld Nick, himself, playin' the bag-pipes for them. It was unco interesting and oor man, wha was lookin' in at the window, was sae entertained that he forgot where he was and yells out at one o' the witches: "Weel done, cutty sark!" He had juist time tae think o' himsel' and get his auld mare turned intae the road when the hale bunch were after him.

It seems that a witch canna cross a running stream and that was all that saved oor friend that night. Juist as he got tae the bridge o' Doon one o' the witches got the mare, Maggie, by the tail. But one spiring left the auld hag behind, although wi' Maggie's tail in her possession. The farmer was safe: but the sight o' his steed, minus her tail, was a warning tae him, and all the ither Carrick farmers, as lang as she lived, tae never stay ower late at night in the toon o' Ayr, nae matter how guid the company.

This is the auld yarn that Burns used tae build "Tam o' Shater" on, and no one who has read the poem will deny that he had only less imagination than had the chap that started the story in the first place.

They say that no man ever was a hero tae his servant, meaning that the servant kenned all his master's weak points ower weel to hae much respect for him. But I ran across something lately in connection wi' Robbie Burns that goes tae prove that there are some exceptions tae the rule, if rule ye can call it.

Burns had a man working for him, on the farm, by the name o' William Clark, and this Clark tells a little of what he thought o' his "boss", and what like a man he found him during the six months he worked for him. Clark says he was as guid a farm-manager as the general run o' his neibors, although there was a chance o' making some improvements to the farm, if that sort o' thing had been in the fashion. Burns had the place rented and I suppose he had no mind to make his landlord rich by fixing up his property.

He kept nine or ten milch cows, some young cattle, four horses and some pet sheep. There was a streak o' the poet in him whatever he went at, ye can see that.

Clark says that Burns was a guid master and he never saw him out o' temper but once and, as for being the worse o' liquor, at ony time, he saw naething o' it. However, if there was ony extra wark tae be done, the servants always got their "dram."

Taking him all in all I dinna think Burns was as muckle o' a scape-grace as some hae made out. He straightened oot towards the last, onyway. Anither thing. Ony one who has kept his feelings in as guid shape as Burns kept his hasna rin sae vera far off the track. If his heart wasna in the right place he could never hae written what he has. He had a guid feyther and he never got oot o' mind o' his teaching.

"My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,  
And carefully he bred me in decency and order,  
He bade me act a manly part, though I had n'er a farthing,  
For without an honest manly heart,  
No man was worth regarding."

Pretty hard for him to gae a'thegither to the bad wi' that in his mind, I'm willin' tae believe. He had the "honest, manly heart" tae the last. The whole story o' his life has inspiration in it for ilka one o' us, onyway. Nae gettin' aroond that.

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
An honest man's the noblest work of God."

A farmer was the father of twelve children, all of whom had been rocked in the same cradle. He was rocking the newest arrival one evening when his wife remarked: "John, that cradle is nearly worn out; it's so rickety I'm fraid it will fall to pieces."

"It is about used up," her husband agreed. Then, handing her ten dollars, he added: "The next time you go to town get a new one, a good one, one that will last."



"A Merry Christmas to All"

and, as Tiny Tim observed,

"God Bless Us Everyone"

