

THE PITLOFTIE GHOST;

Or, The Fate of the Wild Flower of Doon.

BY JOHN J. O'SHEA.

Being an ardent admirer of Bobbie Burns, the people's poet, I found myself one day sitting on the banks of bonnie Doon, hard by his bowery birth-place in Ayr.

The day was hot, and so was I—for I had been mugged out of all my loose silver by the enterprising folk who have appropriated Bobbie Burns, and who will not allow any one to get a glimpse of anything belonging to him, away down in Ayr, until they have paid smart down in Ayr.

Perched on the battlement of the old Brig of Doon, a one-storied structure with a gradient which might appall an Alpine climber, was a Highland piper. He discoursed Caledonian music of an exasperating character.

After he had gone through a choice selection of quick things, which all seemed to have pretty much the same air, I hailed him.

"Haven't you got anything slower?" said I—"something that a tired traveller might find soothing?"

"Something wif' sentiment in it, I suppose? Ay, mon; I ken ye weel, just listen to this yin!"

He began an air so dismally slow and depressing that I could not stand more than a bar or two, and I intimated as much in very plain language.

"I thought ye would be ravished o'er that mon," said he, in an offended tone. "Ye're awer hard to please, I trow. Naebody but likes that air: it's 'To Mary in Heaven.'"

"More like a wail for her being somewhere else," I replied. "Have you got any other to sell—a hair from the tail of Tam o'Shanter's mare, or anything in that line?"

I had been annoyed by the attentions of a ruffian vendor of Burns' relics and souvenirs of the place, and what not. The good man did not perceive any irony in the question, but answered quite gravely:

"Ye seem to forget that the young witch wi' the cuttie sark carried away all the good beastie's tail when Tam got to the Brig. What became of the tail nobody ken. But I have a relic of the Pitloftie ghast, if ye care to see that."

I had never heard of the Pitloftie-ghost before that, and when I confessed my barbarian ignorance, he generously offered to enlighten me.

"It's a dour story," he observed with a mournful face when he had gulped down a fair measure of Highland whisky from a flask, "and it draws tears from many an 'e when 'tis told. But ye've stand it, maybe?"

"I'm prepared to stand a good deal," I replied, "but I draw the line at the effluvia of short range, and especially with 'Mary in Heaven.' Tell me about the eminent Pitloftie specter."

He plunged his hand into his gaiters, and the receptacle which is known in Highland parlance as the philibeg, and fished up a nugget of shining black coal.

"That's a muckle sign of witch or warlock in that wee black morsel," he said, as he handed it to me. "But for a' that 'tis a right dour relic of the Pitloftie-ghost. Noo, I'll tell ye 'bout it."

The musician lit his cuttie pipe, and while I smoked a cigar he unfolded his narrative. But into plain English, this is what he told me:

One of the suggest farmers in Ayr shire was Archibald Rintoul. His sheep and cattle pastures were the richest in all the shire; he supplied the town with the best beef and mutton and the finest milk that could be got for money.

Thrift and honesty and a steady attendance at church were his conspicuous virtues. He used to boast he never owed any one a shilling and he never owed a shilling to a beggar. Winter or summer, rain or shine, he never failed to be in his place at the kirk twice on the Sabbath.

What his bank account was nobody knew but himself and the bank people; he felt pretty safe here below, and he had made large investments above, he piously believed, by a devout attention to his proscribed religious duties and a diligent study of the Bible. He knew the inspired volume from title page to imprint.

Archie Rintoul was the envy of many less fortunate folk, so pious a man was he, so well-filled was his purse, and so well-stocked his farms.

Archie Rintoul had a wife—and a daughter. This was his family and no more. His wife was a meek, homely lady, who minded her house well and to whom Archie's word was law. Jennie Rintoul, the daughter, was neither meek nor homely. She was wilful and she was fair to look at.

Pitloftie was the name of Archie Rintoul's land. Jennie Rintoul was known all over the countryside as the Wild Flower of Pitloftie. There was meaning in the description.

Having no son or heir, all Archie Rintoul's hopes were fixed upon his daughter. As it was known that she should have a rich "tacher," there were some self-sacrificing members of the lesser aristocracy found willing to plant their genealogical trees on Archie Rintoul's farm.

High lineage was not much of a consideration, however, with Archie Rintoul. His own he deemed good enough. He knew the capacity of shabby gentility for spending other folk's money. The man for him and Jennie Rintoul should be one who could show pound for pound with her dowry, and who worked as hard and prayed as hard as he. This was his ultimatum.

So learned the Laird of Pennistown when he came in state to Pitloftie to tender his hand and his metaphorical heart to the beauty of Pitloftie. She gave him a courtesy and grimace (behind his back) and returned him to her father, just as though it was a matter in which she had no voice or choice herself.

Not much time was consumed in the discussion. There was no stirrup-cup as the Laird rode off, and the leave-taking was not elaborate. And yet the

Laird of Pennistown was a handsome cavalier, and much sought after by the best families in the shire who would turn up their noses at Crosus himself if he had been engaged in trade.

As the Laird of Pennistown rode away home, he passed one corner of Archie Rintoul's big tillage farm. "He's a thriftless carl, after all," he said to himself, "and maybe not so rich as I think. He doesn't keep his place in good order, anyhow."

It was a wild patch, a large one, too. It was quite overgrown with weeds, and studded with boulders and abler bushes. He reined in his horse to get a better look at the place. It was an uncanny looking spot, he thought. Some of the loose stones he noticed were black. He dismounted, threw the reins over a stunted tree and began scraping with his sword. Then he picked up one of the black lumps, put it into his pouch, and went his way.

That evening Archie Rintoul went off to Ayr to attend a meeting of the church elders. Mrs. Rintoul had a headache and went to bed. Jennie Rintoul sat in the kitchen plying her spinning wheel. She sat near the window, and in order to get better light at her work, maybe, placed her candle on the sill.

Not very long had the taper been there when the notes of a bar or two of "Comin' Through the Rye" were whistled by somebody passing the house. It might be a chance passer-by. Anyhow Jennie got up and opened the door to see. She was a very careful maiden when she liked, so she made no noise, lest she might disturb her mother.

A tall and well-built young fellow stood outside.

"I've come to say goodbye, Jennie," he said, in a tone of desperation, as he led her from the house out of earshot. "I've seen your father this evening and spoken to him about you. 'Is all over with me, lassie; Scotland is no longer a land for me. There is no love, no home for me anywhere now.'"

"What do you mean, Angus?" the girl exclaimed, clutching his arm. "Oh, why did you cut so rashly? Tell me what my father said!"

"I mean, lassie," he returned in a voice choked with bitterness, "that I'm off to the land where men are free and equal, and where an honest man's religion is not looked upon as a brand of the Evil One. Your father spurned me as he would spurn a mongrel hound, and told me never to cross the bonnie of Pitloftie again. He cursed me for a Papist carl!"

"He did? Well, by my tooth, his daughter is not going to turn her back upon the man she loves for all the fathers in the world! No, Angus Blair, if you go, Jennie Rintoul goes along with you, for better or for worse, to share your fortune and work by your side, good weather and bad, the wide world over!"

A hoarse, suppressed cry of delight escaped his lips as he caught her up in his arms as though she had been only a babe. Heaven's blessing on thee, Jennie!" he cried, "what a treasure is mine! I have a little money—enough to take us away to Nova Scotia. The ship sails to-morrow week."

"Do not go until there is no other hope," she said. "I am not going to die like a coward. I will see my father when he comes home, and tell him my resolve. I am a woman of full age, and though he may keep all his money he cannot make me change my mind."

Angus Blair was nothing more than a hard-lidded, but he was a man every inch. He was an honest lad who could look his fellow-man in the face without fear or fawning. He was a bonnie lad to look at, too; a brow wreathed and a good man to toss the caber or pitch the hammer or the stone or the dance the gill-tocallum. But, alas, the day, he was a Papist of the old stock!

Archie Rintoul would as soon have seen the black devil in a son-in-law of his as Angus Blair.

Bitter as the dose was, though, Archie Rintoul had to gulp it. Jennie was as good as her word, and, telling him that she was not to be bought or sold like a farm beastie, she left the house to get married to Angus before they sailed for Nova Scotia.

Then a sudden change came over Archie Rintoul. He went to Glasgow after his daughter and brought her and her husband back with him. Then he settled half his land on them, on condition that his son-in-law build a house on the neglected portion of the tillage farm, and live there afterwards with Jennie.

"For the love of God, Archie," cried his wife, with ashen face, when they had departed, after signing this covenant, "do not make them carry out this bargain. Have ye no heart, man, that ye would compel your ain child to live for aye on the Gaidwan's land?"

"Silence!" he thundered, clutching her by the arm and the spirit of murder glittering in his eyes. "If ye cry me or breathe one word of this to a living soul, ye'll never open your lips again. That's all I have to tell ye, so look to it!"

"They built the house, but ere it was finished Mrs. Rintoul was in her grave. She wasted away for a while and then suddenly the news came that she was dead. No one knew the cause and no questions were asked by the neighbors, for Archie Rintoul was known to be a God-fearing church-going man.

It was a comfortable house that Angus Blair put up, well built and fair to look at. But he did not live in it very long, nor Jennie either. She died a raving maniac within a few months after they went into it. Then the truth came out that the place was the abode of evil spirits.

Frightful sounds were constantly coming from beneath the house, and sulphurous vapors often made it intolerable. Archie Rintoul said nothing when he heard of his daughter's death, neither did he attend her funeral. But in less than a week afterward he was found hanging by his neck from a rafter in his kitchen.

A bearded hag, bent double with age, came up to Angus Blair, as he stood at the door of his cottage with darkened eyes fixed blankly on the mist-wreathed hills.

"Ye were a brave chiel," she shrieked, "to go and build a house on the deil's own ground. But ye ken noo that the guidman will bid nae nae interlopers!"

He did not heed the beladame, deeming that she was mad. Just then the Laird of Pennistown rode up on his horse.

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"Will you sell me this house and piece of land, Angus Blair?" he said. "You can have your own price for it. I suppose you will be glad to get rid of it."

He was right. The bargain was made then and there, and Angus Blair left the accursed spot forever.

A coming man was the Laird of Pennistown. He had discovered that a coal seam ran there for miles, and he had been working it for some time before. The noise and the sulphurous vapors came from the borings below.

He pulled down Angus Blair's house to sink a new shaft, as the seam was richest there. But before the work was finished the whole place sank into the earth, making a great chasm. The waters of a mountain stream rushed into the hollow, and where Pitloftie once stood there is now a pretty piece of water—a bonnie lake.

"The nugget of coal in your hand," said the old piper, "is a piece of the Laird's coal. So ye see I have told ye true. It is a genuine relic of the Pitloftie Ghost."

"Am I to infer," I queried, when I had looked at the black morsel, "that Archibald Rintoul really believed that this piece of his, which he called Good-man's Lot, was a sort of the Evil One, and, believing this, gave it as a present to his disbelieving hives and an unwelcome son-in-law?"

"Aye, that's just," replied the story-teller. "It came down in the family, like. A good many of the old race of farmers believed that the Prince of Darkness had some influence over the harvest and the year and the sheep, and so to keep him in good humor they gave him a corner of the field (a linn) to him. But the belief has died out since that time. Like me noo, kens that the corner which was called Pitloftie was in Archie Rintoul's ain black heart."—Catholic Union and Times.

LIFE ON A FARM.

ONE OF HARDSHIP AND CONSTANT EXPOSURE.

FREQUENTLY THE MOST LOGGED CONSTITUTIONS ARE BROKEN DOWN—A PRO-FOUND FARMER TELLS OF THE WONDERFUL REGULATIVE POWERS OF A FAMOUS MEDICINE.

From the Assiniboian, Saltcoats, N. W. T.

Every one around Yorktown knows Mr. Dan Garry, and what a pushing active business farmer he was until a gripple took hold of him, and when that enemy let him, how listless and unlit for hand toil he became. For months he suffered from the baneful after-effects of the trouble, and although he still endeavored to take his share of the farm work, he found that it was very trying; he had become greatly weakened, had lost both appetite and ambition, and was tired with the least exertion. He tried several remedies without deriving any benefit, and as one after the other failed, he determined to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a trial. He felt so utterly worn out that several boxes of the pills were taken before he found any benefit, but with the first signs of improvement he took fresh courage, and continued taking the pills for three months, by the end of which time he was again an active hustling man, feeling better than he had for years. Mr. Garry tells his own story in the following letter to the Assiniboian:

"DEAR SIR,—After a severe attack of the gripple I was unable to recover my former strength and activity, I had no ambition for either work or pleasure, and to use a popular phrase, 'I did not care whether school kept or not.' I tried various medicines without deriving any benefit from them. With not much hope I decided to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and was agreeably pleased to find, after a few boxes, a decided change for the better. My appetite, which had failed me, returned, and I began to look for my meals half an hour before time, and I was able to get around with my old time vim. I continued the use of the Pink Pills for three months, and find myself now better than ever. You may therefore depend upon it that from this out I will be found among the thousands of other enthusiastic admirers of Dr. Williams' wonderful health restoring medicine."

Yours gratefully, DAN GARRY.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills strike at the root of the disease, driving it from the system and restoring the patient to health and strength. In cases of paralysis, spinal troubles, locomotor ataxia, sciatica, rheumatism, erysipelas, scrofulous troubles, etc., these pills are superior to all other treatment. They are also a specific for the troubles which make the lives of so many women a burden, and speedily restore the rich glow of health to pale and sallow cheeks. Men broken down by overwork, worry or excesses, will find in Pink Pills a certain cure. Sold by all dealers or sent by

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mail, post paid, at 50c a box, or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont. Beware of imitations and substitutes alleged to be just as good."

WIT AND HUMOUR.

Teacher. So, George, you were named after George Washington, were you? Young George: Yes'm; some time after.

Apprentice: What does a marriage license cost? Clerk: Well, really, it's hard to tell; you have tried one for fifteen or twenty years.

Donor: You handled me very gently during the process examination, Lawyer: Ah, sir, I don't know how soon you might be handling me.

Friend: It must be awful to have the newspapers keep saying such things

about you. Political candidate: Yes, but supposing they didn't say anything at all?

Young Doctor: Do you have much difficulty in making your patients do what you want them to do? Old Doctor: Yes; particularly when I send in my bills.

First Detective: Strange that I didn't recognize him. I thought I'd know him in any disguise. Second Detective: But when he was caught he had no disguise. First Detective: Oh, that accounts for it.

"Dear me, Ad-Idont," said the poet's wife, "this stuff doesn't make sense." "I know that as well as you do," said the poet. "It isn't intended to make sense. It is to make money. I was ordered by a magazine.

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Testimony of Dr D. Marsolais Lavallée

Testimony of Dr G Desrosiers, St. Felix de Valois

I have used several bottles of Robson's Hair Restorer, and I cannot count the number of times I have been cured of the itching and burning which I suffered from on my scalp. It is a most valuable preparation, restoring to gray hair its natural color, making it soft and glossy and giving it an incomparable lustre. ROBSON'S HAIR RESTORER is far superior to all other hair restorers, for it does not stain the skin and is most beneficial to the scalp. Its most remarkable qualities is the power it possesses of preventing the falling out of the hair, promoting its growth and preserving its vitality. - Numerous and very interesting testimonials from all women THE BUREAU and other sources of good standing testify to the marvellous efficiency of ROBSON'S HAIR RESTORER. Lack of space allows us to reproduce only the two following

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