

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LUMMIES AND THE MAD SOW.

“The soo and Geordie tried a race,  
Geordie fell an’ broke his face;  
‘Grumph,’ said the soo, ‘I’ve won the race,’  
An’ turned her tail to Geordie.”

OLD BALLAD.

ONE of the most exciting incidents that happened during my time in the parish occurred on a hot Sunday afternoon in July. “Aul’ Lummies,” as he was called, having come from the Parish of Lumphanan, took off a feu in the village and built a house upon it. The portion of land allotted to it was named after him “Lummie’s Knowe.” It was a barren heritage, and it was likely to remain in that condition, for “Lummies” was as “lazy as he was long.” His neighbour wives called him “a nesty sklipse.” One of them never uttered the contemptuous word but she spat upon the ground. When the minister spoke to him about the insanitary condition of his domicile and its surroundings, he replied—“A nuisance, sir! Fa ever heard sic a name for a muck midden?” On the Sunday afternoon referred to, “Lummies” went to the knowe to flit the cow, and there he lay down and fell asleep. He had not slept long when, to use his own words, “he never got sic a fleg in his life. A great muckle soo ran richt ower me squilein’ like a sticket beast. Then I sees aul’ ‘Boillies,’ wi’ nae coat on his back nor bonnet on his head, an’ a lot o’ mair fowk wi’ him, runnin’ doon the knowe like mad. ‘Boillies’ cries tae me, ‘Foo the d——l didna ye turn back the soo? Run efter her, man.’ I set aff an’ ran till I could run nae mair. I clappit doon for want o’ breath. Eppie Petrie tried tae turn her at the Clayholes, but she fleggit Eppie’s coo an’ the stirk, an’ they ran hame wi’ their tails on en’ an’ the soo ahin’ them.”

It was at this juncture that the writer and other “idle loons” joined in the chase. At that time the present mansion house of

Aberlour was being built and the village was full of men employed in its erection, and as the mad sow ran down the village street, old and young rushed out to see the fun and join in the race. "The fiery cross" never had such a following. Nelly Grant was there with a pair of "bachels" (old shoes) on her feet. She called out to her neighbour, the Deacon, 'Run, Geordy, man, run; tailors aye rest fan they run.'" "Run yersel', Nelly Grant," replied the deacon in his most pompous style; "the soo's mad, Nelly Grant; there's an evil spirit in the beast." The tailor's words seemed to find confirmation, for after at least two hours' chase the sow took to the water and swam through the Spey.

At that time many good and pious people in the parish believed in many things that we in our modern enlightenment and wisdom laugh at. The belief that the enemy of mankind had the power to rule the elements was general. Was it not affirmed in Scripture? Old "Dykie" on a boisterous harvest day tried in vain to fix the top sheaves upon a corn stack that he had built. The crowning sheaves require to stand upright. As soon as he placed a sheaf in this position it was instantly blown from his grasp. At length the old man lost his temper, and took one sheaf after another and threw them to the raging wind. "There, deevil," said he, "tak' them a'." We wonder at the credulity of the refined Greeks and other heathen peoples in their belief in all kinds of gods, good and bad, but it is still stranger to read that such a widespread belief existed in our own enlightened land in the power possessed by the enemy of mankind to manifest himself in various shapes and forms. This may be in some measure accounted for by the prominence given to his name in the sermons preached by ministers, who denounced him and all his works in forcible language.

There was one man in Morayshire whose name is likely to live as long as the Lossie runs to the sea. Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun was not only believed to be in league with Satan, but if tradition is to be credited, he outwitted his master more than once. By way of confirmation, I give the following story as it was told to me:—"The laird had in his service a fine, buxom, rosy-faced quine as dairymaid. She was gey fond o' the lads, an' she put off her milkin' till the gloamin', when the lads were oot o' the yoke an' had time tae come in aboot. Ae nicht a strange lad

stappit into the byre an' said, 'This is a fine nicht, lassie. I was passin' the door an' heard ye singin'. I've been tae the merchant's for a bit tobacca. I've come to live at the next toon.' The lassie thoct she had never seen a better like lad atween the stilts o' a ploo, an' verra seen she was ower the lugs in love wi' him. Ae nicht she was on her hunkers milkin' the last coo. As she lookit through the open door her lover cam' in, an' to her horror she noticed he had cloven feet like a coo. But she did the wisest thing that she could hae deen: she telt the laird a' about it. He gave her a lang can'le an' telt her tae ha'e't burnin' fan the deil cam' tae see her next time. 'If he asks ye, as he is sure tae dae, tae gang wi' him at ance accordin' tae yer promise, just say I will fan that can'le burns tae an' en.' The next nicht the lassie did as she was telt. 'Agreed,' said the deil. The lass quickly pull't the can'le oot o' the socket an' lichtet it at the ither en'. She had nae seener deen this than the deil flew oot at the door like a fire-flaucht."

"To cheat the deil" and "Deil tak' the hindmost" were expressions at one time constantly used by Scotch folks in their everyday conversation. Very few of them had any idea how they originated. When the Laird of Gordonstoun was receiving his education in the black arts in the academy that Satan had established in Italy, the only fee the latter demanded was that the last scholar that came out at the door when the school was broken up at the end of the term was to be his. It so happened that the Laird of Gordonstoun was the last to pass out at the door, and his master was waiting to lay hold of him. Sir Robert said to Satan, "Take the man behind me." Satan made a grab, but it was at the laird's shadow on the wall, and he found that his pupil had learned his lesson when he was able to "cheat the deil." After that event he was known as the "Shadowless Laird."

It is remarkable how frequently allusion is made to Satan in old Scottish ballads. There is not perhaps in all the wide range of them one to compare in this respect to "Cumberland and Murray's descent into Hell." The pen that wrote it must have been dipped in brimstone instead of ink. One verse will be enough to satisfy the reader. The ballad consists of ten six-line verses:—

“ Ae deevil sat splittin’ brimstane matches,  
 Ane roastin’ the Whigs like baker’s batches,  
 Ane wi’ fat a Whig was bastin’,  
 Spent wi’ frequent prayer and fastin’ ;  
 A’ ceased when thae twin butchers roar’d,  
 And hell’s grim hangman stopt an’ glower’d.”

The ballad refers to Cumberland and Secretary Murray, the latter of whom turned King’s evidence in the trial of his comrades after 1745, and earned for himself the bitterest hatred of all Jacobites.

A venerable and respected mother of a large family solemnly declared to the writer that a certain young “cutty” had bewitched her son Willie. “Oh, the limmer!” said she, “he’s nae the only ane that she’s played her cantrips on. There was puir Jock M’Farlane; she had him clean oot o’ his min’. She gave him a drink, an’ she did the same tae Willie, an’ he’s gaun aboot like ane dementit. The abominable hussy, she deserves tae be brunt in a tar barrel.” The “cutty” referred to was no witch, but nevertheless she was very bewitching, and certainly the way that poor Willie followed her went to prove his mother’s words that he was “dementit.”