THE

WIFE OF BEITH:

BEING

AN ALLEGORICAL DIALOGUE.

CONTAINING

NOTHING BUT WHAT IS RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

THE
WIFE OF BEITH.

In Beith once dwelt a worthy wife,
Of whom brave Chaucer mention makes
She lived a licentious life,
And namely in venereal acts
But death did come for all her cracks;
When years were spent and days out driven,
Then suddenly she sickness takes,
Deceased forthwith, and went to heaven.
  But as she went upon the way,
There followed her a certain guide,
And kindly to her he did say,
Where mean you, dame, for to abide?
I know you are the wife of Beith,
And would not then that you go wrong,
For I'm your friend, and will be leath
That you go through this narrow throng;
This way is broader, go with me,
And very pleasant is the way;
I'll bring you there, where you would be,
Go with me friend, say me not nay,
  She looked on him, then did speer,
I pray you, Sir, what is your name?

Shew me the way how came you here?
To tell to me it is no shame.
Is that a favour 'bout your neck?
And what is that upon your side?
I knew you by your colours first,
Is it a bag or silver sack?
What are you then? where do you bide?
I was a servant unto Christ,
And Judas likewise is my name.
Forsooth indeed you are to blame:
Your Master did you not betray?
And hang yourself when you had done?
Where'er you bide I will not stay
Go then, you knave, let me alone.
Whatever I be, I'll be your guide,
Because you know not well the way.
What would you me, where do you dwell?
I have no will to go with thee:
I fear it is some lower cell,
I pray thee therefore let me be.
I know your way it is to hell,
For you are none of the eleven:
Go haste you then unto your cell,
My way is only unto heaven.
That way is by the gates of hell,
If you intend there for to go,
Go, dame, I will not you compel,
But I with you will go also,

Where smoke and darkness did abound,
And pitch and sulphur burned still,
With yells and cries hills did rebound,
The fiend himself came to the gate,
And asked him where he had been?
Do ye not know and have forgot,
Seeking his wife could not be seen.
Good dame, he said, would you be here,
I pray you then tell me your name?
The wife of Beith, since that you speer,
But to come in I were to blame.
I will not have you here good dame,
For you were mistress of the flyting,
If once within this gate you come,
I will be troubled with your bitings
Cummer, go back, and let me be,
Here are too many of your rout,
For women lewd like unto thee,
I cannot turn my foot about.
Sir, thief, I say I shall bide out,
But gossip thou wast ne'er to me,
For to come in, I'm not so stout,
And of my biting thou'st be free:
But, Lucifer, what's that on thee,
Hast thou no water in this place?
Thou look'st so black, it seems to me
Thou ne'er dost wash thy ugly face.
If we had water for to drink,

We should not care for washing then,
Into these flames and filthy stink,
We burn with fire unto the doom:
Upbraid me then, good wife, no more,
For first when I heard of the name,
I knew thou hast such names in store,
Would make the devil to think shame.
Forsooth, Sir thief, thou art to blame,
If I had time now for to bide.
Once you were well, but may think shame,
That lost heaven for rebellious pride,
Who traitor-like fell with the rest,
Because you would not be content,
And now of bliss are dispossest,
Without all grace for to repent,
Thou mad'st poor Eve for to consent
To eat of the forbidden tree;
(Which we poor daughters may relent
And made us almost like to thee;
But God be blest who passed thee by,
And did a Saviour provide,
For Adam's whole posterity,
All those who do in him confide.
Adieu, false fiend, I may not bide,
With thee I may no longer stay;
My God in death he was my guide,
O'er hell I'll get the victory.
Then up the hill the poor wife went,

Oppressed with stinking flames and fear.
Weeping right sore with great relent,
For to go else she wist not where:
A narrow way with thorns and briers,
And full of mires was her before,
She sighed oft with sobs and tears,
The poor wife's heart was wonderous sore,
Tired and torn she went on still,
Sometimes she sat, and sometimes fell,
Aye till she came to a high hill,
And then she looked back to hell.
When that she had climbed up the hill,
Before her was a goodly plain;
Where she did rest and weep her fill,
Then rose she to her feet again,
Her heart was glad the way was good,
Up to the hill she hy'd with haste,
The flowers were fair, where that she stood
The fields were pleasant to her taste.
Then she espied Jerusalem,
On Sion's mount where that it stood
Shining with gold light as the sun,
Her silly soul was then right glad;
The ports were pearls shining bright,
Glorious it was for to behold,
With precious stones give such a light,
The walls were of transparent gold.
High were the walls, the gates were shut.

And long she thought for to be in
But then for fear of biding out,
She knocked hard and made some din.
To knock and cry she did not spare.
Till father Adam did her hear;
Who is't that raps so rudely there,
Heaven cannot well be won by weir.
The wife of Beith' since that you speer,
Hath stood these two hours at the gate.
Go back, saith he, you must forbear,
Here may no sinners entrance get.
Adam, quoth she, I shall be in,
In spite of all such churls as thee:
Thou'rt the original of all sin,
For eating of the forbidden tree:
For which thou art not flyting free,
But for thy foul offences fled.
Adam went back and let her be;
Looking as if his nose had bled.
Then mother Eve did at him speer
Who was it that made such a din?
He said a woman would be here,
For me, I durst not let her in.
I'll go, said she, and ask her will,
Her company I would have fain;
But aye she cried and knocked still,
And in no ways she would refrain.
Daughter, said Eve, you will do well,

And come again another time
Heaven is not won by sword or steel,
Nor one that's guilty of a crime.
Mother, said she, the fault is thine,
That knocking here so long I stand:
Thy guilt is more than that of mine,
If thou wilt rightly understand,
Our misery thou didst begin,
By thee thy husband was deceived
Eve went back where Noah was,
And told him all how she was blam'd,
Of her great sin and first trespass,
Whereof she was so much ashamed.
Then Noah said, I will go down,
And will forbid her that she knock;
Go back, he said, ye drunken lown,
You're none of the celestial flock.
Noah, she said, hold thou thy piece,
Where I drank ale, thou didst drink wine,
Discovered was to thy disgrace,
When thou wast full like to a swine:
If I was drunk I learned at thee,
For thou'rt the father and the first,
That others taught, and likewise me,
To drink when we as had no thirst.
Then Noah turned back with speed,
And told the Patriarch Abraham then,
How that the carlin made him dread,

And how she all his deeds did ken.
Abraham then said, now get you gone,
Let us no more hear of your din
No lying wife as I suppone,
May enter in these gates within.
Abraham, she said, will you but spare,
I hope you are not flyting free;
You of yourself had such a care,
Denied your wife and made a lie;
O then I pray you let me be,
For I repent of all my sin,
Do thou but open the gates to me,
And let me quietly come in.
Abraham went back to Jacob then,
And told his nephew how he sped,
How that of her he nothing wan,
And that he thought the carlin mad.
Then down came Jacob throu' the close,
And said, go backward down to hell:
Jacob, quoth she, I know thy voice,
That gate pertaineth to thy sell
Of thy old trumperies I can tell,
With two sisters thou led'st thy life
And the third part of these tribes twelve,
Thou got with maid's besides thy wife:
And stole thy father's bennison,
Only by fraud thy father frae;
Gave thou not him for venison,

A kid, instead of baked rae,
Jacob himself was tickled so,
He went to Lot where he was lying,
And to the gate he pray'd him to go,
To staunch the carling of her crying.
Lot says fair dame, make less ado,
And come again another day.
Old harlot carle and drunkard too,
Thou with thine own two daughters lay,
Of thine untimely seed I say,
Proceeded never good but ill.
Poor Lot, for shame then stole away,
And left the wife to knock her fill.
Meek Moses then went down at last,
To pacify the carling then;
Now, dame, said he, knock not so fast,
Your knocking will not let you ben.
Good Sir, said she I am aghast,
When that I look you in the face;
If that your law till now did last,
Then surely I had ne'er got grace:
But, Moses, Sir, now by your leave,
Although in heaven thou be possest
For all you saw, did not believe.
But you in Horeb there transgres
Wherefore by all it is confest,
You got but once the land to see,
And in the mount was put to rest,

Yea burried there where, you did die.
Then Aaron said, you whorish wife,
Go get you gone and rap no more ;
With idols you have led your life,
Or then you shall repent it sore.
Good Aaron Priest, I know you well,
The golden calf you may remember,
Who made the people plagues to see,
This is of you recorded ever;
Your priesthood now is nothing worth,
Christ is my only priest and he,
My Lord who will not keep me forth,
So I'll get in, in spite of thee
Up started Samson at the length,
Unto the gate apace came he,
To drive away the wife with's strength,
But all in vain it would not be.
Samson, says she, the world may see,
Thou wast a Judge who proved unjust,
Those gracious gifts which God gave thee,
Thou lost them by licentious lust.
From Dalila thy wicked wife,
The secrets chief couldst nor refrain,
She daily sought to take thy life,
Thou lost thy locks and then was slain,
Tho' thou wast strong it was in vain,
Haunting with harlots here and there.
Then Sams back again,

And with the wife would mell nae mair.
Then said king David, knock no more.
We are all troubled with your cry.
David, quoth she, how cam'st thou there,
Thou might'st bide out as well as I :
Thy deeds no ways thou can'st deny,
Is not thy sin far worse than mine,
Who with Uriah's wife did lie,
And caused him to be murdered syne ?
Then Jonas said, fair dame content you,
If you intend to come to grace,
You must dree pennance and repent you,
Ere you can come within this place.
Jonas, quoth she, how stands the case ?
How came you here to be with Christ ?
How dare you look him in the face ?
Considering how you broke your tryst ?
So Jonas then he was ashamed,
Because he was not flyting free,
Of all his faults she had him blamed,
He left the wife and let her be.
Saint Thomas then, I counsel thee
Go speak unto yon wicked wife,
She shames us all and as for me,
Her like I never heard in life
Thomas, then said, you make such strife,
When you are out, and meikle din,
If ye were here I'll lay my life,

No peace the saints will get within,
It is your trade for to be flyting,
Still in a fever as one raves,
No marvel though you wives be biting,
Your tongues are made of aspen leaves.
Thomas, quoth she, let be your taunts,
You play the pick-thank I perceive,
Tho' you be brother'd 'mong the saints,
An unbelieving heart you have
Thou brought'st the Lord unto the grave,
But would'st no more with him remain,
And wast the last of all the lave
That did believe he rose again.
There might no doctrine do thee good,
No miracles make thee confide,
Till thou beheld Christ's wounds and blood,
And putt'st thy hands into his side;
Didst thou not daily with him bide,
And see the wonders which he wrought?
But blest are they who do confide,
And do believe, yet saw him not;
Thomas, she says, will ye but speer,
If that my sister Magdelene,
Will come to me, if she be here;
For comforts sure you give me nane.
He was so blythe and turned back,
And thanked God that she was gane;
He had no will to hear her crack,

But told it Mary Magdalene.
When that she heard her sister's mocks,
She went unto the gate with speed;
And asked her who's there that knocks;
'Tis I the wife of Beith indeed.
She said, good mistress, you must stand
Till you be tried by tribulation.
Sister, quoth she, give me your hand
Are we not both of one vocation;
It is not through your occupation,
That you are placed so divine,
My faith is fixed on Christ's passion,
My soul shall be as safe as thine.
Then Mary went away in haste,
The carling made her so ashamed,
She had no will of such a guest,
To lose her pains and be so blamed.
Now good Saint Paul, said Magdalene,
For that you are a learned man,
Go and convince this woman then,
For I have done all that I can;
Sure if she were in hell, I doubt
They would not keep her long there,
But to the gate would put her out,
And send her back to be elsewhere.
Then went the good apostle Paul,
To put the wife in better tune,
Wash off that filth that files thy soul,

Then shalt heaven's gates be opened soon.
Remember, Paul, what thou hast done,
For all the epistles thou didst compile,
Though now thou sittest up above,
Thou persecuted'st Christ a while.
Woman, he said, thou art not right,
That which I did, I did not know;
But thou didst sin with all thy might,
Although the preachers did thee show
Saint Paul, she said, it is not so
I did not know so well as ye,
But I will to my Saviour go,
Who will his favour shew to me
You think you are of flyting free,
Because you was rapt up above,
But yet it was Christ's grace to thee,
And matchlessness of his dear love.
Then Paul, says she, let Peter come,
If he be lying let him rise,
To him I will confess my sin,
And let him quickly bring the keys,
Too long I stand, he'll let me in,
For why I cannot longer tarry,
Then shall ye all be quit of din,
For I must speak with good saint Mary,
Peter, said she, let Christ arise,
And grant me mercy in my need;
For why I ne'er deny'd him thrice,

As thou thyself hast done indeed
Thou carling bold, what's that to thee?
I got remission for my sin;
It cost many sad tears to me,
Before I entered here within.
It will not be thy meikle din
Will cause heaven's gates opened be,
Thou must be purified of sin,
And of all sins must be made free.
Saint Peter then, no thanks to you,
That so you were rid of your fears,
It was Christ's gracious look, I trow,
That made you weep those bitter tears.
The door of mercy is not closed,
I may get grace as well as ye,
It is not so as ye supposed,
I will be in in spite of thee.
But wicked wife, it is too late,
Thou should'st have mourn'd on earth,
Repentance now is out of date:
It should have been before thy death,
Thou mightest then have turned wrath
To mercy then, and mercy great,
But now the Lord is very loth,
And all thy cries not worth a jot.
Ah! Peter, then, what shall I do?
He will not hear me as I hear,
Shall I despair of mercy too?

No, no, I'll trust in mercy dear;
And if I perish, here I'll stay
And never go from heaven bright
I'll ever hop and always pray,
Until I get my Saviour's sight.
I think indeed you are not right,
If you had faith you could win in;
Importune then with all your might,
Faith is the feet wherewith ye come:
It is the hands will hold him fast,
But weak faith may not presume;
'Twill let you sink, and be aghast
Strongly believe, or you're undone
But, good saint Peter, let me be,
Had you such faith, did it abound?
When you did walk upon the sea,
Was you not like for to be drown'd,
Had not our Saviour helped thee,
Who came and took thee by the hand,
So can my Lord do unto me,
And bring me to the promised land.
Is my faith weak? yet he is still
The same and ever shall remain;
His mercies last, and his good will,
To bring me to his flock again;
He will me help and me relieve,
And will increase my faith also,
Of weakly I can but believe,

For from this place I'll never go
But Peter said, how can that be,
How durst thou look him in the face.
Such horrid sinners like to thee,
Can have no courage to get grace;
Here none comes in but they that's stout,
And suffered have for the good cause;
Like unto thee are keeped out,
For thou hast broke all Moses' laws.
Peter, she said, I do appeal,
From Moses, and from thee also.
With him and you I'll not prevail,
But to my Saviour I will go;
Indeed of old you were right stout;
When yon did cut off Malchus' ear;
But after that you went about;
And a poor maid then did you fear.
Wherefore, saint Peter, do forbear,
A comforter indeed you're not;
Let me alone, I do not fear,
Take home the whistle of your groat:
Was it your own, or Paul's good sword,
When that your courage was so keen,
You were right stout upon my word,
Then would you fain at fishing been;
For at the crowing of the cock,
You did deny your master thrice,
For all your stoutness turned a block,

Now flyte no more if ye be wise.
Yet at the last the Lord arose,
Environed with angels bright,
And to the wife in haste he goes,
Desired her soon pass out of sight.
O Lord, quoth she, cause do me right,
But not according to my sin;
Have you not promised day and night,
When sinners knock to let them in.
He said thou wrests the scriptures wrong
The night is come thou spent the day,
In whoredom thou hast lived long,
And to repent thou didst delay;
Still my commandments thou abus'dst,
And vice committedst busily,
Since now my mercy thou refus'dst,
Go down to hell eternally.
O Lord, my soul doth testify,
That I have spent my life in vain;
Ah! make a wand'ring sheep of me,
And bring me to thy flock again.
Think'st thou there is no count to crave,
Of all these gifts in thee was planted,
I gave thee beauty 'bove the lave,
A pregnant wit thou never wanted.
Master, quoth she, it must be granted,
My sins is great give me contrition:
The forlorn son when he repented,

Obtained his father full remission.
I spared my judgments many times
And spiritual pastors did thee send;
But thou renewd'st thy former crimes,
Aye more and more me to offend.
My Lord, quoth she, I do amend,
Lamenting for my former vice
The poor thief at the latter
For one word went to paradise.
The thief heard never of me teaching,
My heavenly precepts and my laws,
But thou was daily at my preachings,
Both heard and saw, and yet miskaws.
Master, quoth she, the scriptures shows,
The Jewish woman which play'd the lown,
Conform unto the Hebrew laws,
Was brought to thee to be put down;
But nevertheless thou lett'st her go,
And made the Pharisees afraid.
Indeed, says Christ it was right so,
And that my bidding was obey'd,
Woman, he said, I may not cast
The childrens' bread to dogs like
Although my mercies yet do last,
There's mercy here but none for thee
But, loving Lord, may I presume
Poor worm, that I may speak again,
The dogs for hunger were undone,

And of the crumbs they were right fain,
Grant me one crumb then that did fall
From thy best childrens' table, Lord,
That I may be refreshed withal,
It will not help enough afford.
The gates of mercy now are closed,
And thou canst hardly enter in:
It is not so as thou supposed,
For thou art deadly sick in sin.
'Tis true indeed, my Lord most meek
My sore and sickness I do feel:
Yet thou the lame didst truly seek,
Who lay long at Bethseda's pool,
Of many that thee never sought,
Like to the poor Samaritan;
Whom thou unto thy fold has brought,
Even as thou didst the widow of Nain
Most gracious God, didst thou not bid
All that were weary come to thee,
Behold, I come! even overload
With sin, have mercy upon me.
The issues of thy soul are great,
Thou art both leprous and unclean,
To be with me thou art not fit,
Go from me then, let me alone.
Let me thy garments once but touch,
My bloody issue shall be whole,
It will not cost thee very much,

To save a poor distressed soul,
Speak thou the word, I shall be whole,
One look of thee shall do me good,
Save now, good Lord, my silly soul,
Bought with thine own most precious blood
Sweet Lord my God, say me not nay,
For if I perish here I'll die.
Poor silly wretch, then speak no more,
Thy faith, poor soul, hath saved thee;
Enter thou in unto my glore,
And rest thro' all eternity.
How soon our Saviour these words said,
A long white robe to her was given;
And then the angels did her lead,
Forthwith within the gates of heaven:
A laurel crown set on her head,
Spangled with rubies and with gold:
A bright white palm she always had,
Glorious it was for to behold;
Her face did shine like to the sun,
Like threads of gold her hair hang down,
Her eyes like lamps unto the moon,
Of precious stones rich was her crown.
Angels and saints did welcome her,
The heavenly choir did sing, rejoice;
King David with his harp was there:
The silver bells gave a great noise.
Such music and such melody

Was never either heard or seen,
When this poor saint was placed so high,
And of all sins made freely clean;
But then when thus she was possest,
And looked back on all her fears;
And that she was come to her rest,
Free'd from all sins, and all her tears,
She from her head did take the crown,
Giving all praise to Christ on high,
And at his feet she laid it down.
For that the Lamb had made her free,
Now doth she sing triumphantly,
And shall rejoice for evermore,
O'er death and hell victoriously
With lasting pleasures laid in store.

CONCLUSION.

Of WIFE OF BEITH I make an end,
And do these lines with this conclude,
Let none their lives in sin now spend,
But watch and pray, be doing good,
Despondent souls do not despair,
Repent, and still believe in Christ,
His mercies, which last for evermore,
Will save the souls that in him trust.

FINIS.