

# Robert Burns

## THE COMPLETE WORKS

### DEDICATION

#### TO THE NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CALEDONIAN HUNT

[On the title-page of the second or Edinburgh edition, were these words: “Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns, printed for the Author, and sold by William Creech, 1787.” The motto of the Kilmarnock edition was omitted; a very numerous list of subscribers followed: the volume was printed by the celebrated Smellie.]

My Lords and Gentlemen:

A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service, where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land: those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my

songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours: that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated, and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honour, the Monarch of the universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party: and may social joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats; and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant

glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be,  
With the sincerest gratitude and highest respect,  
My Lords and Gentlemen,  
Your most devoted humble servant,  
ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, April 4, 1787.

Mossgiel, 13th Nov. 1786.

## TO DR. ARCHIBALD LAURIE

Dear Sir,

I have along with this sent the two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the Songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the Songs, with the volume of the Scotch Poets, returned as soon as they can conveniently be dispatched. If they are left at Mr. Wilson, the bookseller's shop, Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Laurie; and a Poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies; particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of a Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the Feelings of a poet to be

interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St. Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion.

I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,  
Robert Burns.

## **THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS**

### **I. WINTER. A DIRGE**



[This is one of the earliest of the poet's recorded compositions: it was written before the death of his father, and is called by Gilbert Burns, 'a juvenile production.' To walk by a river while flooded, or through a wood on a rough winter day, and hear the storm howling among the leafless trees, exalted the poet's thoughts. "In such a season," he said, "just after a train of misfortunes, I composed Winter, a Dirge."]

The wintry west extends his blast,  
And hail and rain does blaw;  
Or the stormy north sends driving forth  
The blinding sleet and snaw;  
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,  
And roars frae bank to brae;  
And bird and beast in covert rest,  
And pass the heartless day.  
"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"<sup>1</sup>  
The joyless winter day  
Let others fear, to me more dear  
Than all the pride of May:  
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,  
My griefs it seems to join;

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Young.

The leafless trees my fancy please,  
Their fate resembles mine!  
Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme  
These woes of mine fulfil,  
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,  
Because they are Thy will!  
Then all I want (O, do thou grant  
This one request of mine!)  
Since to enjoy Thou dost deny,  
Assist me to resign!

## II. THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE. AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE

[This tale is partly true; the poet's pet ewe got entangled in her tether, and tumbled into a ditch; the face of ludicrous and awkward sorrow with which this was related by Hughoc, the herd-boy, amused Burns so much, who was on his way to the plough, that he immediately composed the poem, and repeated it to his brother Gilbert when they met in the evening; the field where the poet held the plough, and the ditch into which poor Mailie fell, are still pointed out.]

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,  
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,

Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,  
An' owre she warsl'd in the ditch:  
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,  
When Hughoc<sup>2</sup> he cam doytin by.  
Wi' glowing e'en an' lifted han's,  
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;  
He saw her days were near-hand ended,  
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it!  
He gaped wide but naething spak—  
At length poor Mailie silence brak.  
“O thou, whose lamentable face  
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!  
My dying words attentive hear,  
An' bear them to my master dear.  
“Tell him, if e'er again he keep  
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,  
O bid him never tie them mair  
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!  
But ca' them out to park or hill,  
An' let them wander at their will;  
So may his flock increase, and grow  
To scores o' lambs, an' packs of woo'!  
“Tell him he was a master kin'  
An' ay was gude to me an' mine;  
An' now my dying charge I gie him,

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<sup>2</sup> A neibor herd-callan.

My helpless lambs, I trust them wi' him.  
“O, bid him save their harmless lives  
Frae dogs, and tods, an' butchers' knives!  
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,  
Till they be fit to fend themsel;  
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,  
Wi' teats o' hay, an' rippis o' corn.  
“An' may they never learn the gaets  
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' pets!  
To sink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal  
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.  
So may they, like their great forbears,  
For monie a year come thro' the sheers;  
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,  
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.  
“My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir,  
O, bid him breed him up wi' care;  
An' if he live to be a beast,  
To pit some havins in his breast!  
An' warn him what I winna name,  
To stay content wi' yowes at hame  
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,  
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes.  
“An' niest my yowie, silly thing,  
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!  
O, may thou ne'er forgather up  
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop,  
But ay keep mind to moop an' mell



Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!  
“And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath  
I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith:  
An' when you think upo' your mither,  
Mind to be kind to ane anither.  
“Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail  
To tell my master a' my tale;  
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,  
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blather.”  
This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,  
And clos'd her een amang the dead.

### III. POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY

[Burns, when he calls on the bards of Ayr and Doon to join in the lament for Mailie, intimates that he regards himself as a poet. Hogg calls it a very elegant morsel: but says that it resembles too closely “The Ewie and the Crooked Horn,” to be admired as original: the shepherd might have remembered that they both resemble Sempill's “Life and death of the Piper of Kilbarchan.”]

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,  
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose;  
Our bardie's fate is at a close,  
Past a' remead;

The last sad cape-stane of his woes;  
Poor Mailie's dead.

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,  
That could sae bitter draw the tear,  
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear  
The mourning weed;  
He's lost a friend and neebor dear,  
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him;  
A long half-mile she could descry him;  
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,  
She run wi' speed:  
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,  
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,  
An' could behave hersel wi' mense:  
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,  
Thro' thievish greed.

Our bardie, tamely, keeps the spence  
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wonders up the howe,  
Her living image in her yowe  
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,  
For bits o' bread;  
An' down the briny pearls rowe  
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips<sup>3</sup>,  
Wi' tawted ket, an hairy hips;  
For her forbears were brought in ships  
Frae yont the Tweed:  
A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips  
Than Mailie dead.  
Wae worth the man wha first did shape  
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape!  
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,  
Wi' chokin dread;  
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,  
For Mailie dead.  
O, a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!  
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!  
Come, join the melancholious croon  
O' Robin's reed!  
His heart will never get aboon!  
His Mailie's dead!

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<sup>3</sup> VARIATION.

'She was nae get o' runted rams,  
Wi' woo' like goats an' legs like trams;  
She was the flower o' Farlie lambs,  
A famous breed!  
Now Robin, greetin, chews the hams  
O' Mailie dead.'

## IV. FIRST EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET

[In the summer of 1781, Burns, while at work in the garden, repeated this Epistle to his brother Gilbert, who was much pleased with the performance, which he considered equal if not superior to some of Allan Ramsay's Epistles, and said if it were printed he had no doubt that it would be well received by people of taste.]

—January, [1784.]

### I.

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,  
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,  
And hing us owre the ingle,  
I set me down to pass the time,  
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,  
In hamely westlin jingle.

While frosty winds blaw in the drift,  
Ben to the chimla lug,  
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,  
That live sae bien an' snug:  
I tent less and want less  
Their roomy fire-side;  
But hanker and canker  
To see their cursed pride.

### II.

It's hardly in a body's power

To keep, at times, frae being sour,  
To see how things are shar'd;  
How best o' chiefls are whiles in want.  
While coofs on countless thousands rant,  
And ken na how to wair't;  
But Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,  
Tho' we hae little gear,  
We're fit to win our daily bread,  
As lang's we're hale and fier:  
"Muir spier na, nor fear na,"<sup>4</sup>  
Auld age ne'er mind a feg,  
The last o't, the warst o't,  
Is only but to beg.

### III.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en  
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,  
Is, doubtless, great distress!  
Yet then content could make us blest;  
Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste  
O' truest happiness.  
The honest heart that's free frae a'  
Intended fraud or guile,  
However Fortune kick the ba',  
Has ay some cause to smile:  
And mind still, you'll find still,

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<sup>4</sup> Ramsay.

A comfort this nae sma';  
Nae mair then, we'll care then,  
Nae farther we can fa'.

IV.

What tho', like commoners of air,  
We wander out we know not where,  
But either house or hall?  
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,  
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,  
Are free alike to all.

In days when daisies deck the ground,  
And blackbirds whistle clear,  
With honest joy our hearts will bound  
To see the coming year:  
On braes when we please, then,  
We'll sit and sowth a tune;  
Syne rhyme till't we'll time till't,  
And sing't when we hae done.

V.

It's no in titles nor in rank;  
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,  
To purchase peace and rest;  
It's no in makin muckle mair;  
It's no in books, it's no in lear,  
To make us truly blest;  
If happiness hae not her seat  
And centre in the breast,  
We may be wise, or rich, or great,

But never can be blest:  
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,  
Could make us happy lang;  
The heart ay's the part ay  
That makes us right or wrang.

VI.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,  
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,  
Wi' never-ceasing toil;  
Think ye, are we less blest than they,  
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,  
As hardly worth their while?  
Alas! how aft, in haughty mood  
God's creatures they oppress!  
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,  
They riot in excess!  
Baith careless and fearless  
Of either heaven or hell!  
Esteeming and deeming  
It's a' an idle tale!

VII.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;  
Nor make one scanty pleasures less,  
By pining at our state;  
And, even should misfortunes come,  
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,  
An's thankfu' for them yet.  
They gie the wit of age to youth;

They let us ken oursel';  
They make us see the naked truth,  
The real guid and ill.  
Tho' losses, and crosses,  
Be lessons right severe,  
There's wit there, ye'll get there,  
Ye'll find nae other where.

### VIII.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!  
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,  
And flatt'ry I detest,)  
This life has joys for you and I;  
And joys that riches ne'er could buy:  
And joys the very best.  
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,  
The lover an' the frien';  
Ye hae your Meg your dearest part,  
And I my darling Jean!  
It warms me, it charms me,  
To mention but her name:  
It heats me, it beets me,  
And sets me a' on flame!

### IX.

O, all ye pow'rs who rule above!  
O, Thou, whose very self art love!  
Thou know'st my words sincere!  
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,  
Or my more dear immortal part,



Is not more fondly dear!  
When heart-corroding care and grief  
Deprive my soul of rest,  
Her dear idea brings relief  
And solace to my breast.  
Thou Being, All-seeing,  
O hear my fervent pray'r!  
Still take her, and make her  
Thy most peculiar care!

X.

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!  
The smile of love, the friendly tear,  
The sympathetic glow!  
Long since, this world's thorny ways  
Had number'd out my weary days,  
Had it not been for you!  
Fate still has blest me with a friend,  
In every care and ill;  
And oft a more endearing hand,  
A tie more tender still.  
It lightens, it brightens  
The tenebrific scene,  
To meet with, and greet with  
My Davie or my Jean!

XI.

O, how that name inspires my style  
The words come skelpin, rank and file,  
Amaist before I ken!

The ready measure rins as fine,  
As Phœbus and the famous Nine  
Were glowrin owre my pen.  
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,  
'Till ance he's fairly het;  
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,  
An' rin an unco fit:  
But least then, the beast then  
Should rue this hasty ride,  
I'll light now, and dight now  
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

## V. SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET

[David Sillar, to whom these epistles are addressed, was at that time master of a country school, and was welcome to Burns both as a scholar and a writer of verse. This epistle he prefixed to his poems printed at Kilmarnock in the year 1789: he loved to speak of his early comrade, and supplied Walker with some very valuable anecdotes: he died one of the magistrates of Irvine, on the 2d of May, 1830, at the age of seventy.]

AULD NIBOR,

I'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,

For your auld-farrent, frien'ly letter;  
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,  
Ye speak sae fair.

For my puir, silly, rhymin clatter  
Some less maun sair.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;  
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,  
To cheer you thro' the weary widdle  
O' war'ly cares,  
Till bairn's bairns kindly cuddle  
Your auld, gray hairs.

But Davie, lad, I'm red ye're glaikit;  
I'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit;  
An' gif it's sae, ye sud be licket  
Until yo fyke;

Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket,  
Be hain't who like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,  
Rivin' the words to gar them clink;  
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,  
Wi' jads or masons;  
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think  
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,  
Commen' me to the Bardie clan;  
Except it be some idle plan  
O' rhymin' clink,  
The devil-haet, that I sud ban,

They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',  
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin';  
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,  
An' while ought's there,  
Then hiltie skiltie, we gae scribevin',  
An' fash nae mair.

Leeze me on rhyme! it's aye a treasure,  
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,  
At hame, a-fiel', at work, or leisure,  
The Muse, poor hizzie!  
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,  
She's seldom lazy.

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie:  
The warl' may play you monie a shavie;  
But for the Muse she'll never leave ye,  
Tho' e'er so puir,  
Na, even tho' limpin' wi' the spavie  
Frae door to door.

## VI. ADDRESS TO THE DEIL

*“O Prince! O Chief of many throned Pow'rs,  
That led th' embattled Seraphim to war.”*

**Milton**

[The beautiful and relenting spirit in which this

fine poem finishes moved the heart on one of the coldest of our critics. "It was, I think," says Gilbert Burns, "in the winter of 1784, as we were going with carts for coals to the family fire, and I could yet point out the particular spot, that Robert first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.' The idea of the address was suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts we have of that august personage."]

O thou! whatever title suit thee,  
Auld Hornie, Satan, Kick, or Clootie,  
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,  
Closed under hatches,  
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,  
To scaud poor wretches!  
Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,  
An' let poor damned bodies be;  
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,  
E'en to a deil,  
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,  
An' hear us squeel!  
Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;  
Far kend an' noted is thy name;  
An' tho' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,  
Thou travels far;  
An', faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,  
Nor blate nor scaur.  
Whyles, ranging like a roaring lion,

For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;  
Whyles, on the strong-winged tempest flyin,  
Tirlin the kirks;  
Whiles, in the human bosom pryin,  
Unseen thou lurks.  
I've heard my reverend Graunie say,  
In lanely glens ye like to stray;  
Or where auld-ruin'd castles, gray,  
Nod to the moon,  
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way  
Wi' eldricht croon.  
When twilight did my Graunie summon,  
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!  
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,  
Wi' eerie drone;  
Or, rustlin, thro' the boortries comin,  
Wi' heavy groan.  
Ae dreary, windy, winter night,  
The stars shot down wi' sklentín light,  
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright  
Ayont the lough;  
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight,  
Wi' waving sough.  
The cudgel in my nieve did shake.  
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,  
When wi' an eldritch, stoor quaick—quaick—  
Amang the springs,  
Awa ye squatter'd, like a drake,

On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,  
Tell how wi' you, on rag weed nags,  
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags  
Wi' wicked speed;

And in kirk-yards renew their leagues  
Owre howkit dead.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,  
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain:  
For, oh! the yellow treasure's taen  
By witching skill;

An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's gaen  
As yell's the bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse  
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;  
When the best wark-lume i' the house  
By cantrip wit,

Is instant made no worth a louse,  
Just at the bit,

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,  
An' float the jinglin icy-boord,  
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord,  
By your direction;

An' nighted trav'lers are allur'd  
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversing spunkies  
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is,  
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkeys

Delude his eyes,  
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,  
Ne'er mair to rise.  
When masons' mystic word an' grip  
In storms an' tempests raise you up,  
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,  
Or, strange to tell!  
The youngest brother ye wad whip  
Aff straught to hell!  
Lang syne, in Eden's bonie yard,  
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,  
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,  
The raptur'd hour,  
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry sward,  
In shady bow'r:  
Then you, ye auld, snick-drawing dog!  
Ye came to Paradise incog.  
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,  
(Black be your fa'!)  
An' gied the infant world a shog,  
'Maist ruin'd a'.  
D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,  
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz,  
Ye did present your smoutie phiz  
'Mang better folk,  
An' sklented on the man of Uzz  
Your spitefu' joke?  
An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,



An' brak him out o' house an' hall,  
While scabs an' botches did him gall,  
Wi' bitter claw,  
An' lows'd his ill tongu'd, wicked scawl,  
Was warst ava?  
But a' your doings to rehearse,  
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,  
Sin' that day Michael did you pierce,  
Down to this time,  
Wad ding a' Lallan tongue, or Erse,  
In prose or rhyme.  
An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin,  
A certain Bardie's rantin, drinkin,  
Some luckless hour will send him linkin  
To your black pit;  
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin,  
An' cheat you yet.  
But fare ye well, auld Nickie-ben!  
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!  
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—  
Still hae a stake—  
I'm wae to think upo' yon den  
Ev'n for your sake!

## **VII. THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE MAGGIE, ON GIVING HER THE**

## ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR

[“Whenever Burns has occasion,” says Hogg, “to address or mention any subordinate being, however mean, even a mouse or a flower, then there is a gentle pathos in it that awakens the finest feelings of the heart.” The Auld Farmer of Kyle has the spirit of knight-errant, and loves his mare according to the rules of chivalry; and well he might: she carried him safely home from markets, triumphantly from wedding-brooses; she ploughed the stiffest land; faced the steepest brae, and, moreover, bore home his bonnie bride with a consciousness of the loveliness of the load.]

A guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie!  
Hae, there's a rip to thy auld baggie:  
Tho' thou's howe-backit, now, an' knaggie,  
I've seen the day  
Thou could hae gaen like onie staggie  
Out-owre the lay.  
Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,  
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisy,  
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie,  
A bonny gray:  
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee,  
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,  
A filly, buirdly, steeve, an' swank,  
An set weel down a shapely shank,  
As e'er tread yird;  
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,  
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year,  
Sin' thou was my guid-father's Meere;  
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,  
An' fifty mark;  
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,  
An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,  
Ye then was trottin wi' your minnie:  
Tho' ye was trickle, slee, an' funny,  
Ye ne'er was donsie:  
But hamely, tawie, quiet an' cannie,  
An' unco sonsie.

That day ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,  
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride:  
An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride,  
Wi' maiden air!

Kyle-Stewart I could bragged wide,  
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hoble,  
An' wintle like a saumont-coble,  
That day, ye was a jinker noble,  
For heels an' win'!

An' ran them till they a' did wauble,  
Far, far, behin'!  
When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,  
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,  
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,  
An' tak the road!  
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abeigh,  
An' ca't thee mad.  
When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,  
We took the road ay like a swallow:  
At Brooses thou had ne'er a fellow,  
For pith an' speed;  
But every tail thou pay't them hollow,  
Where'er thou gaed.  
The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle,  
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;  
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle,  
An' gar't them whaizle:  
Nae whip nor spur, but just a whattle  
O' saugh or hazle.  
Thou was a noble fittie-lan',  
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn:  
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,  
In guid March-weather,  
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han'  
For days thegither.  
Thou never braindg't, an' fetch't, an' fliskit,  
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,

An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,  
Wi' pith an' pow'r,  
'Till spiritty knowes wad rair't and risket,  
An' slypet owre.  
When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,  
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,  
I gied thy cog a wee-bit heap  
Aboon the timmer;  
I ken'd my Maggie wad na sleep  
For that, or simmer.  
In cart or car thou never reestit;  
The steyst brae thou wad hae fac't it;  
Thou never lap, an' sten't, an' breastit,  
Then stood to blow;  
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,  
Thou snoov't awa.  
My pleugh is now thy bairntime a';  
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;  
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa,  
That thou hast nurst:  
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,  
The vera worst.  
Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought,  
An, wi' the weary warl' fought!  
An' monie an anxious day, I thought  
We wad be beat!  
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,  
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld, trusty servan',  
That now perhaps thou's less deservin,  
An' thy auld days may end in starvin,  
For my last fow,  
A heapit stimpart, I'll reserve ane  
Laid by for you.  
We've worn to crazy years thegither;  
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;  
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,  
To some hain'd rig,  
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,  
Wi' sma' fatigue.

## VIII. TO A HAGGIS

[The vehement nationality of this poem is but a small part of its merit. The haggis of the north is the minced pie of the south; both are characteristic of the people: the ingredients which compose the former are all of Scottish growth, including the bag which contains them; the ingredients of the latter are gathered chiefly from the four quarters of the globe: the haggis is the triumph of poverty, the minced pie the triumph of wealth.]

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,  
Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!

Aboon them a' ye tak your place,  
Painch, tripe, or thairm:  
Weel are ye wordy o' a grace  
As lang's my arm.  
The groaning trencher there ye fill,  
Your hurdies like a distant hill,  
Your pin wad help to mend a mill  
In time o' need,  
While thro' your pores the dews distil  
Like amber bead.  
His knife see rustic-labour dight,  
An' cut you up wi' ready slight,  
Trenching your gushing entrails bright  
Like onie ditch;  
And then, O what a glorious sight,  
Warm-reekin, rich!  
Then horn for horn they stretch an' strive,  
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,  
'Till a' their weel-swallow'd kytes belyve  
Are bent like drums;  
Then auld Guidman, maist like to rive,  
Bethankit hums.  
Is there that o'er his French ragout,  
Or olio that wad staw a sow,  
Or fricassee wad mak her spew  
Wi' perfect sconner,  
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view  
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,  
As feckless as a wither'd rash,  
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,  
His nieve a nit;  
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,  
O how unfit!  
But mark the rustic, haggis-fed,  
The trembling earth resounds his tread,  
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,  
He'll mak it whistle;  
An' legs, an' arms, an' heads will sned,  
Like taps o' thrissle.  
Ye pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,  
And dish them out their bill o' fare,  
Auld Scotland wants nae stinking ware  
That jaups in luggies;  
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,  
Gie her a Haggis!

## **IX. A PRAYER, UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH**

[“There was a certain period of my life,” says Burns, “that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened and indeed effected the ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by the most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria or confirmed



melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow-trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following.”]

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art  
Surpasses me to know;  
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee  
Are all Thy works below.  
Thy creature here before Thee stands,  
All wretched and distrest;  
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul  
Obey Thy high behest.  
Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act  
From cruelty or wrath!  
O, free my weary eyes from tears,  
Or close them fast in death!  
But if I must afflicted be,  
To suit some wise design;  
Then, man my soul with firm resolves  
To bear and not repine!

## X. A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH



[I have heard the third verse of this very moving Prayer quoted by scrupulous men as a proof that the poet imputed his errors to the Being who had endowed him with wild and unruly passions. The meaning is very different: Burns felt the torrent-strength of passion overpowering his resolution, and trusted that God would be merciful to the errors of one on whom he had bestowed such o'ermastering gifts.]

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause  
Of all my hope and fear?  
In whose dread presence, ere an hour  
Perhaps I must appear!  
If I have wander'd in those paths  
Of life I ought to shun;  
As something, loudly, in my breast,  
Remonstrates I have done;  
Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me,  
With passions wild and strong;  
And list'ning to their witching voice  
Has often led me wrong.  
Where human weakness has come short,  
Or frailty stept aside,  
Do Thou, All-Good! for such thou art,  
In shades of darkness hide.  
Where with intention I have err'd,  
No other plea I have,  
But, Thou art good; and goodness still  
Delighteth to forgive.

## **XI. STANZAS ON THE SAME OCCASION**

[These verses the poet, in his common-place book, calls "Misgivings in the Hour of Despondency and Prospect of Death." He elsewhere says they were composed when fainting-fits and other alarming

symptoms of a pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder, first put nature on the alarm.]

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?  
How I so found it full of pleasing charms?  
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:  
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:  
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?  
Or Death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?  
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;  
I tremble to approach an angry God,  
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.  
Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"  
Fain promise never more to disobey;  
But, should my Author health again dispense,  
Again I might desert fair virtue's way:  
Again in folly's path might go astray;  
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;  
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,  
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?  
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation

ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!  
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,  
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,  
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:  
With that controlling pow'r assist ev'n me  
Those headlong furious passions to confine;

For all unfit I feel my pow'rs to be,  
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line;  
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine!

## XII. A WINTER NIGHT

*“Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are  
That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm!  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your looped and widow'd raggedness defend you  
From seasons such as these?”*

**Shakspeare.**

[“This poem,” says my friend Thomas Carlyle, “is worth several homilies on mercy, for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy: his soul rushes forth into all the realms of being: nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him.”]

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,  
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;  
When Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glow'r  
Far south the lift,  
Dim-darkening through the flaky show'r,  
Or whirling drift:  
Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,  
Poor labour sweet in sleep was locked,

While burns, wi' snawy wreeths up-choked,  
Wild-eddying swirl.  
Or through the mining outlet bocked,  
Down headlong hurl.  
Listening, the doors an' winnocks rattle,  
I thought me on the ourie cattle,  
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle  
O' winter war,  
And through the drift, deep-lairing sprattle  
Beneath a scar.  
Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,  
That, in the merry months o' spring,  
Delighted me to hear thee sing,  
What comes o' thee?  
Whare wilt thou cower thy chittering wing,  
An' close thy e'e?  
Ev'n you on murd'ring errands toil'd,  
Lone from your savage homes exiled,  
The blood-stained roost, and sheep-cote spoiled  
My heart forgets,  
While pitiless the tempest wild  
Sore on you beats.  
Now Phoebe, in her midnight reign,  
Dark muffled, viewed the dreary plain;  
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,  
Rose in my soul,  
When on my ear this plaintive strain  
Slow, solemn, stole:—

“Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!  
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost:  
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!  
Not all your rage, as now united, shows  
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,  
Vengeful malice unrepenting,  
Than heaven-illumined man on brother man  
bestows;

See stern oppression’s iron grip,  
Or mad ambition’s gory hand,  
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,  
Woe, want, and murder o’er a land!  
Even in the peaceful rural vale,  
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,  
How pamper’d luxury, flattery by her side,  
The parasite empoisoning her ear.  
With all the servile wretches in the rear,  
Looks o’er proud property, extended wide;  
And eyes the simple rustic hind,  
Whose toil upholds the glittering show,  
A creature of another kind,  
Some coarser substance, unrefin’d,  
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile,  
below.

Where, where is love’s fond, tender throe,  
With lordly honour’s lofty brow,  
The powers you proudly own?  
Is there, beneath love’s noble name,

Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,  
To bless himself alone!  
Mark maiden innocence a prey  
To love-pretending snares,  
This boasted honour turns away,  
Shunning soft pity's rising sway,  
Regardless of the tears and unavailing prayers!  
Perhaps this hour, in misery's squalid nest,  
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,  
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking  
blast!

Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,  
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,  
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,  
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!  
Ill satisfied keen nature's clamorous call,  
Stretched on his straw he lays himself to sleep,  
While through the ragged roof and chinky wall,  
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drift heap!  
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,  
Where guilt and poor misfortune pine!  
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!  
But shall thy legal rage pursue  
The wretch, already crushed low  
By cruel fortune's undeserved blow?  
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,  
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"  
I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer



Shook off the pouthery snaw,  
And hailed the morning with a cheer—  
A cottage-rousing crew!  
But deep this truth impressed my mind—  
Through all his works abroad,  
The heart benevolent and kind  
The most resembles God.

### **XIII. REMORSE. A FRAGMENT**

[“I entirely agree,” says Burns, “with the author of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom; an ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up admirably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our follies or crimes have made us wretched, to bear all with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.”]

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,  
That press the soul, or wring the mind with  
anguish,

Beyond comparison the worst are those  
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.  
In every other circumstance, the mind

Has this to say, 'It was no deed of mine;'  
But when to all the evil of misfortune  
This sting is added—'Blame thy foolish self!'  
Or worsèd far, the pangs of keen remorse;  
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt,—  
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others;  
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us,  
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!  
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments,  
There's not a keener lash!  
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart  
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,  
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;  
And, after proper purpose of amendment,  
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?  
O, happy! happy! enviable man!  
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

#### **XIV. THE JOLLY BEGGARS. A CANTATA**

[This inimitable poem, unknown to Currie and unheard of while the poet lived, was first given to the world, with other characteristic pieces, by Mr. Stewart of Glasgow, in the year 1801. Some have surmised that it is not the work of Burns; but the parentage is certain: the original manuscript at the time of its composition, in 1785, was put into the hands of Mr. Richmond of

Mauchline, and afterwards given by Burns himself to Mr. Woodburn, factor of the laird of Craigen-gillan; the song of "For a' that, and a' that" was inserted by the poet, with his name, in the Musical Museum of February, 1790. Cromek admired, yet did not, from overruling advice, print it in the Reliques, for which he was sharply censured by Sir Walter Scott, in the Quarterly Review. The scene of the poem is in Mauchline, where Poesie Nancy had her change-house. Only one copy in the handwriting of Burns is supposed to exist; and of it a very accurate fac-simile has been given.]

**Recitativo .**

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,  
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,  
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;  
When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte  
And infant frosts begin to bite,  
In hoary cranreuch drest;  
Ae night at e'en a merry core  
O' randie, gangrel bodies,  
In Poesie-Nansie's held the splore,  
To drink their orra duddies:  
Wi' quaffing and laughing,  
They ranted an' they sang;  
Wi' jumping and thumping,  
The vera girdle rang.

First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,  
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,  
And knapsack a' in order;  
His doxy lay within his arm,  
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—  
She blinket on her sodger:  
An' ay he gies the tozie drab  
The tither skelpin' kiss,  
While she held up her greedy gab  
Just like an aumous dish.  
Ilk smack still, did crack still,  
Just like a cadger's whip,  
Then staggering and swaggering  
He roar'd this ditty up—

### **Air .**

Tune—"Soldiers' Joy."  
I am a son of Mars,  
Who have been in many wars,  
And show my cuts and scars  
Wherever I come;  
This here was for a wench,  
And that other in a trench,  
When welcoming the French  
At the sound of the drum.  
Lal de daudle, &c.  
My 'prenticeship I past

Where my leader breath'd his last,  
When the bloody die was cast  
On the heights of Abram;  
I served out my trade  
When the gallant game was play'd,  
And the Moro low was laid  
At the sound of the drum.  
Lal de daudle, &c.  
I lastly was with Curtis,  
Among the floating batt'ries,  
And there I left for witness  
An arm and a limb;  
Yet let my country need me,  
With Elliot to head me,  
I'd clatter on my stumps  
At the sound of a drum.  
Lal de dandle, &c.  
And now tho' I must beg,  
With a wooden arm and leg,  
And many a tatter'd rag  
Hanging over my bum  
I'm as happy with my wallet,  
My bottle and my callet,  
As when I used in scarlet  
To follow a drum.  
Lal de daudle, &c.  
What tho' with hoary locks  
I must stand the winter shocks,

Beneath the woods and rocks  
Oftentimes for a home,  
When the tother bag I sell,  
And the tother bottle tell,  
I could meet a troop of hell,  
At the sound of a drum.  
Lal de daudle, &c.

### **Recitativo .**

He ended; and kebars sheuk  
Aboon the chorus roar;  
While frightened rattons backward leuk,  
And seek the benmost bore;  
A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,  
He skirl'd out—encore!  
But up arose the martial Chuck,  
And laid the loud uproar.

### **Air .**

Tune—“Soldier laddie.”  
I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,  
And still my delight is in proper young men;  
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,  
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.  
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.  
The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,

To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;  
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,  
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.

Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,  
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church;  
He ventur'd the soul, and I risk'd the body,  
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.

Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,  
The regiment at large for a husband I got;  
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,  
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.

Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,  
Till I met my old boy in a Cunningham fair;  
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,  
My heart is rejoic'd at my sodger laddie.

Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,  
And still I can join in a cup or a song;

But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass  
steady,

Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.

Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

**Recitativo .**

Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk,  
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie;  
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,  
Between themselves they were sae busy:  
At length wi' drink and courting dizzy  
He stoitered up an' made a face;  
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzie,  
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

### **Air .**

Tune—"Auld Sir Symon."  
Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou,  
Sir Knave is a fool in a session;  
He's there but a 'prentice I trow,  
But I am a fool by profession.  
My grannie she bought me a beuk,  
And I held awa to the school;  
I fear I my talent misteuk,  
But what will ye hae of a fool?  
For drink I would venture my neck,  
A hizzie's the half o' my craft,  
But what could ye other expect,  
Of ane that's avowedly daft?  
I ance was ty'd up like a stirk,  
For civilly swearing and quaffing;  
I ance was abused in the kirk,  
Fer touzling a lass i' my daffin.



Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,  
Let naebody name wi' a jeer;  
There's ev'n I'm tauld i' the court  
A tumbler ca'd the premier.  
Observ'd ye, yon reverend lad  
Maks faces to tickle the mob;  
He rails at our mountebank squad,  
Its rivalship just i' the job.  
And now my conclusion I'll tell,  
For faith I'm confoundedly dry;  
The chiel that's a fool for himsel',  
Gude L—d! he's far dafter than I.

**Recitativo .**

Then neist outspak a raucle carlin,  
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterling,  
For monie a pursie she had hooked,  
And had in mony a well been ducked.  
Her dove had been a Highland laddie,  
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie!  
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began  
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

**Air .**

Tune—"O an ye were dead, guidman."  
A Highland lad my love was born,  
The Lalland laws he held in scorn;  
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,

My gallant braw John Highlandman.

**Chorus .**

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman!

Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman!

There's not a lad in a' the lan'

Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,

An' gude claymore down by his side,

The ladies' hearts he did trepan,

My gallant braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,

An' liv'd like lords and ladies gay;

For a Lalland face he feared none,

My gallant braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

They banished him beyond the sea,

But ere the bud was on the tree,

Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,

Embracing my John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

But, och! they catch'd him at the last,

And bound him in a dungeon fast;

My curse upon them every one,

They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn,  
The pleasures that will ne'er return:  
No comfort but a hearty can,  
When I think on John Highlandman.  
Sing, hey, &c.

### **Recitativo .**

A pigmy scraper, wi' his fiddle,  
Wha us'd at trysts and fairs to driddle,  
Her strappan limb and gausy middle  
He reach'd na higher,  
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,  
An' blawn't on fire.  
Wi' hand on hainch, an' upward e'e,  
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,  
Then in an Arioso key,  
The wee Apollo  
Set off wi' Allegretto glee  
His giga solo.

### **Air .**

Tune—"Whistle o'er the lave o't."  
Let me ryke up to dight that tear,  
And go wi' me and be my dear,  
And then your every care and fear  
May whistle owre the lave o't.

## **Chorus .**

I am a fiddler to my trade,  
An' a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,  
The sweetest still to wife or maid,  
Was whistle owre the lave o't.  
At kirns and weddings we'se be there,  
And O! sae nicely's we will fare;  
We'll house about till Daddie Care  
Sings whistle owre the lave o't  
I am, &c.

Sae merrily the banes we'll byke,  
And sun oursells about the dyke,  
And at our leisure, when ye like,  
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.  
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,  
And while I kittle hair on thairms,  
Hunger, cauld, and a' sic harms,  
May whistle owre the lave o't.  
I am, &c.

## **Recitativo .**

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,  
As weel as poor gut-scraper;  
He taks the fiddler by the beard,

And draws a roosty rapier—  
He swoor by a' was swearing worth,  
To speet him like a pliver,  
Unless he wad from that time forth  
Relinquish her for ever.  
Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle-dee  
Upon his hunkers bended,  
And pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,  
And sae the quarrel ended.  
But tho' his little heart did grieve  
When round the tinkler prest her,  
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,  
When thus the caird address'd her:

### **Air .**

Tune—"Clout the Caudron."  
My bonny lass, I work in brass,  
A tinkler is my station:  
I've travell'd round all Christian ground  
In this my occupation:  
I've taen the gold, an' been enrolled  
In many a noble sqadron:  
But vain they search'd, when off I march'd  
To go and clout the caudron.  
I've taen the gold, &c.  
Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,  
Wi' a' his noise and caprin,

And tak a share wi' those that bear  
The budget and the apron.  
And by that stoup, my faith and houp,  
An' by that dear Kilbaigie,<sup>5</sup>  
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,  
May I ne'er weet my craigie.  
An' by that stoup, &c.

### **Recitativo .**

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair  
In his embraces sunk,  
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,  
An' partly she was drunk.  
Sir Violino, with an air  
That show'd a man of spunk,  
Wish'd unison between the pair,  
An' made the bottle clunk  
To their health that night.  
But urchin Cupid shot a shaft,  
That play'd a dame a shavie,  
A sailor rak'd her fore and aft,  
Behint the chicken cavie.  
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,  
Tho' limping wi' the spavie,

---

<sup>5</sup> A peculiar sort of whiskey.

He hirpl'd up and lap like daft,  
And shor'd them Dainty Davie  
O boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade  
As ever Bacchus listed,  
Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,  
His heart she ever miss'd it.  
He had nae wish but—to be glad,  
Nor want but—when he thirsted;  
He hated nought but—to be sad,  
And thus the Muse suggested  
His sang that night.

### **Air .**

Tune—"For a' that, an' a' that."  
I am a bard of no regard  
Wi' gentle folks, an' a' that:  
But Homer-like, the glowran byke,  
Frae town to town I draw that.

### **Chorus .**

For a' that, an' a' that,  
An' twice as muckle's a' that;  
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',  
I've wife enough for a' that.  
I never drank the Muses' stank,

Castalia's burn, an' a' that;  
But there it streams, and richly reams,  
My Helicon I ca' that.  
For a' that, &c.  
Great love I bear to a' the fair,  
Their humble slave, an' a' that;  
But lordly will, I hold it still  
A mortal sin to thraw that.  
For a' that, &c.  
In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,  
Wi' mutual love, an a' that:  
But for how lang the flie may stang,  
Let inclination law that.  
For a' that, &c.  
Their tricks and craft have put me daft.  
They've ta'en me in, and a' that;  
But clear your decks, and here's the sex!  
I like the jads for a' that

### **Chorus .**

For a' that, an' a' that,  
An' twice as muckle's a' that;  
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,  
They're welcome till't for a' that

### **Recitativo .**



So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's  
Shook with a thunder of applause,  
Re-echo'd from each mouth:  
They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds,  
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,  
To quench their lowan drouth.  
Then owre again, the jovial thrang,  
The poet did request,  
To loose his pack an' wale a sang,  
A ballad o' the best;  
He rising, rejoicing,  
Between his twa Deborahs  
Looks round him, an' found them  
Impatient for the chorus.

### **Air .**

Tune—"Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses."  
See! the smoking bowl before us,  
Mark our jovial ragged ring!  
Round and round take up the chorus,  
And in raptures let us sing.

### **Chorus .**

A fig for those by law protected!  
Liberty's a glorious feast!  
Courts for cowards were erected,

Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?

What is reputation's care?

If we lead a life of pleasure,

'Tis no matter how or where!

A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,

Round we wander all the day;

And at night, in barn or stable,

Hug our doxies on the hay.

A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage

Through the country lighter rove?

Does the sober bed of marriage

Witness brighter scenes of love?

A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,

We regard not how it goes;

Let them cant about decorum

Who have characters to lose.

A fig, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!

Here's to all the wandering train!

Here's our ragged brats and wallets!

One and all cry out—Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!

Liberty's a glorious feast!

Courts for cowards were erected,

Churches built to please the priest.

## **XV. DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK. A TRUE STORY**

[John Wilson, raised to the unwelcome elevation of hero to this poem, was, at the time of its composition, schoolmaster in Tarbolton: he as, it is said, a fair scholar, and a very worthy man, but vain of his knowledge in medicine—so vain, that he advertised his merits, and offered advice gratis. It was his misfortune to encounter Burns at a mason meeting, who, provoked by a long and pedantic speech, from the Dominie, exclaimed, the future lampoon dawning upon him, “Sit down, Dr. Hornbook.” On his way home, the poet seated himself on the ledge of a bridge, composed the poem, and, overcome with poesie and drink, fell asleep, and did not awaken till the sun was shining over Galston Moors. Wilson went afterwards to Glasgow, embarked in mercantile and matrimonial speculations, and prospered, and is still prospering.]

Some books are lies frae end to end,  
And some great lies were never penn'd:  
Ev'n ministers, they ha'e been kenn'd,  
In holy rapture,  
A rousing whid, at times, to vend,

And nail't wi' Scripture.  
But this that I am gaun to tell,  
Which lately on a night befel,  
Is just as true's the Deil's in h—ll  
Or Dublin-city;  
That e'er he nearer comes oursel  
'S a muckle pity.  
The Clachan yill had made me canty,  
I was na fou, but just had plenty;  
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent ay  
To free the ditches;  
An' hillocks, stanes, and bushes, kenn'd ay  
Frae ghaists an' witches.  
The rising moon began to glow'r  
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre:  
To count her horns with a' my pow'r,  
I set mysel;  
But whether she had three or four,  
I could na tell.  
I was come round about the hill,  
And todlin down on Willie's mill,  
Setting my staff with a' my skill,  
To keep me sicker;  
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,  
I took a bicker.  
I there wi' something did forgather,  
That put me in an eerie swither;  
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouter,

Clear-dangling, hang;  
A three-taed leister on the ither  
Lay, large an' lang.  
Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,  
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,  
For fient a wame it had ava:  
And then, its shanks,  
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'  
As cheeks o' branks.  
"Guid-een," quo' I; "Friend, hae ye been mawin,  
When ither folk are busy sawin?"  
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',  
But naething spak;  
At length, says I, "Friend, where ye gaun,  
Will ye go back?"  
It spak right howe,— "My name is Death,  
But be na fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid faith,  
Ye're may be come to stap my breath;  
But tent me, billie;  
I red ye weel, take care o' skaith,  
See, there's a gully!"  
"Guidman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,  
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;  
But if I did, I wad be kittle  
To be mislear'd,  
I wad nae mind it, no that spittle  
Out-owre my beard."  
"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;

Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't;  
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat,  
Come, gies your news!  
This while ye hae been mony a gate  
At mony a house.  
"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,  
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed  
Sin' I began to nick the thread,  
An' choke the breath:  
Folk maun do something for their bread,  
An' sae maun Death.  
"Sax thousand years are near hand fled  
Sin' I was to the butching bred,  
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,  
To stap or scar me;  
Till ane Hornbook's ta'en up the trade,  
An' faith, he'll waur me.  
"Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the Clachan,  
Deil mak his kings-hood in a spleuchan!  
He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan<sup>6</sup>  
An' ither chaps,  
The weans haud out their fingers laughin  
And pouk my hips.  
"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,  
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;

---

<sup>6</sup> Buchan's Domestic Medicine.

But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art  
And cursed skill,  
Has made them baith no worth a f-t,  
Damn'd haet they'll kill.

“’Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen,  
I threw a noble throw at ane;  
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;  
But-deil-ma-care,  
It just play'd dirl on the bane,  
But did nae mair.

“Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,  
And had sae fortified the part,  
That when I looked to my dart,  
It was sae blunt,  
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart  
Of a kail-runt.

“I drew my scythe in sic a fury,  
I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry,  
But yet the bauld Apothecary,  
Withstood the shock;  
I might as weel hae tried a quarry  
O' hard whin rock.

“Ev'n them he canna get attended,  
Although their face he ne'er had kend it,  
Just sh- in a kail-blade, and send it,  
As soon's he smells't,  
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,  
At once he tells't.

“And then a’ doctor’s saws and whittles,  
Of a’ dimensions, shapes, an’ mettles,  
A’ kinds o’ boxes, mugs, an’ bottles,  
He’s sure to hae;  
Their Latin names as fast he rattles  
As A B C.

“Calces o’ fossils, earths, and trees;  
True sal-marinum o’ the seas;  
The farina of beans and pease,  
He has’t in plenty;  
Aqua-fortis, what you please,  
He can content ye.

“Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,  
Urinus spiritus of capons;  
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,  
Distill’d per se;  
Sal-alkali o’ midge-tail clippings,  
And mony mae.”

“Waes me for Johnny Ged’s-Hole<sup>7</sup> now,”  
Quo’ I, “If that thae news be true!  
His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew,  
Sae white and bonie,  
Nae doubt they’ll rive it wi’ the plew;  
They’ll ruin Johnie!”  
The creature grain’d an eldritch laugh,

---

<sup>7</sup> The grave-digger.



And says, “Ye need na yoke the plough,  
Kirkyards will soon be till’d eneugh,  
Tak ye nae fear;  
They’ll a’ be trench’d wi’ mony a sheugh  
In twa-three year.

“Whare I kill’d ane a fair strae death,  
By loss o’ blood or want of breath,  
This night I’m free to tak my aith,  
That Hornbook’s skill  
Has clad a score i’ their last claith,  
By drap an’ pill.

“An honest wabster to his trade,  
Whase wife’s twa nieves were scarce weel bred,  
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,  
When it was sair;

The wife slade cannie to her bed,  
But ne’er spak mair

“A countra laird had ta’en the batts,  
Or some curmurring in his guts,  
His only son for Hornbook sets,  
An’ pays him well.

The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets,  
Was laird himsel.

“A bonnie lass, ye kend her name,  
Some ill-brewn drink had hov’d her wame;  
She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,  
In Hornbook’s care;  
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,

To hide it there.  
“That’s just a swatch o’ Hornbook’s way;  
Thus goes he on from day to day,  
Thus does he poison, kill, an’ slay,  
An’ s weel paid for’t;  
Yet stops me o’ my lawfu’ prey,  
Wi’ his d—mn’d dirt:  
“But, hark! I’ll tell you of a plot,  
Though dinna ye be speaking o’t;  
I’ll nail the self-conceited sot,  
As dead’s a herrin’:  
Niest time we meet, I’ll wad a groat,  
He gets his fairin’!”  
But just as he began to tell,  
The auld kirk-hammer strak’ the bell  
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,  
Which rais’d us baith:  
I took the way that pleas’d mysel’,  
And sae did Death.

## **XVI. THE TWA HERDS: OR, THE HOLY TULZIE**

[The actors in this indecent drama were Moodie, minister of Ricartoun, and Russell, helper to the minister of Kilmarnock: though apostles of the “Old Light,” they forgot their brotherhood in the vehemence

of controversy, and went, it is said, to blows. “This poem,” says Burns, “with a certain description of the clergy as well as laity, met with a roar of applause.”]

O a' ye pious godly flocks,  
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,  
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,  
Or worrying tykes,  
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks,  
About the dykes?  
The twa best herds in a' the wast,  
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast,  
These five and twenty simmers past,  
O! dool to tell,  
Ha'e had a bitter black out-cast  
Atween themsel.  
O, Moodie, man, and wordy Russell,  
How could you raise so vile a bustle,  
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle  
And think it fine:  
The Lord's cause ne'er got sic a twistle  
Sin' I ha'e min'.  
O, sirs! whae'er wad ha'e expeckit  
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,  
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit,  
To wear the plaid,  
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,  
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,  
Sae hale and hearty every shank,  
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank,  
He let them taste,  
Frae Calvin's well, ay clear they drank,—  
O sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock, and tod,  
Weel kend his voice thro' a' the wood,  
He smelt their ilka hole and road,  
Baith out and in,  
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,  
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale,  
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,  
He kend the Lord's sheep, ilka tail,  
O'er a' the height,  
And saw gin they were sick or hale,  
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,  
Or nobly fling the gospel club,  
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,  
Or pay their skin;  
Could shake them o'er the burning dub,  
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,  
Sic famous twa should disagree't,  
An' names, like villain, hypocrite,  
Ilk ither gi'en,

While New-Light herds, wi' laughin' spite,  
Say neither's liein'!  
An' ye wha tent the gospel fauld,  
There's Duncan, deep, and Peebles, shaul,  
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,  
We trust in thee,  
That thou wilt work them, hot and cauld,  
Till they agree.  
Consider, Sirs, how we're beset;  
There's scarce a new herd that we get  
But comes frae mang that cursed set  
I winna name;  
I hope frae heav'n to see them yet  
In fiery flame.  
Dalrymple has been lang our fae,  
M'Gill has wrought us meikle wae,  
And that curs'd rascal call'd M'Quhae,  
And baith the Shaws,  
That aft ha'e made us black and blae,  
Wi' vengefu' paws.  
Auld Wodrow lang has hatch'd mischief,  
We thought ay death wad bring relief,  
But he has gotten, to our grief,  
Ane to succeed him,  
A chield wha'll soundly buff our beef;  
I meikle dread him.  
And mony a ane that I could tell,  
Wha fain would openly rebel,

Forbye turn-coats amang oursel,  
There's Smith for ane,  
I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,  
An' that ye'll fin'.  
O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,  
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,  
Come, join your counsel and your skills  
To cow the lairds,  
And get the brutes the powers themsels  
To choose their herds;  
Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,  
And Learning in a woody dance,  
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,  
That bites sae sair,  
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:  
Let him bark there.  
Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,  
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,  
M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,  
And guid M'Math,  
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,  
May a' pack aff.

## **XVII. HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER**

*“And send the godly in a pet to pray.”*

**Pope.**

[Of this sarcastic and too daring poem many copies in manuscript were circulated while the poet lived, but though not unknown or unfelt by Currie, it continued unpublished till printed by Stewart with the Jolly Beggars, in 1801. Holy Willie was a small farmer, leading elder to Auld, a name well known to all lovers of Burns; austere in speech, scrupulous in all outward observances, and, what is known by the name of a “professing Christian.” He experienced, however, a “sore fall;” he permitted himself to be “filled fou,” and in a moment when “self got in” made free, it is said, with the money of the poor of the parish. His name was William Fisher.]

O thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,  
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,  
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,  
A' for thy glory,  
And no for ony gude or ill  
They've done afore thee!  
I bless and praise thy matchless might,  
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,  
That I am here afore thy sight,  
For gifts and grace,  
A burnin' and a shinin' light  
To a' this place.  
What was I, or my generation,

That I should get sic exaltation,  
I wha deserve sic just damnation,  
For broken laws,  
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,  
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,  
Thou might hae plunged me in hell,  
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,  
In burnin' lake,

Whar damned devils roar and yell,  
Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here a chosen sample;  
To show thy grace is great and ample;  
I'm here a pillar in thy temple,  
Strong as a rock,

A guide, a buckler, an example,  
To a' thy flock.

But yet, O Lord! confess I must,  
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;  
And sometimes, too, wi' warldly trust,  
Vile self gets in;

But thou remembers we are dust,  
Defil'd in sin.

O Lord! yestreen thou kens, wi' Meg—  
Thy pardon I sincerely beg,  
O! may't ne'er be a livin' plague  
To my dishonour,  
An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg



Again upon her.  
Besides, I farther maun allow,  
Wi' Lizzie's lass, three times I trow—  
But Lord, that Friday I was fou,  
When I came near her,  
Or else, thou kens, thy servant true  
Wad ne'er hae steer'd her.  
Maybe thou lets this fleshly thorn,  
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,  
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,  
'Cause he's sae gifted;  
If sae, thy han' maun e'en be borne  
Until thou lift it.  
Lord, bless thy chosen in this place,  
For here thou hast a chosen race:  
But God confound their stubborn face,  
And blast their name,  
Wha bring thy elders to disgrace  
And public shame.  
Lord, mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,  
He drinks, and swears, and plays at carts,  
Yet has sae mony takin' arts,  
Wi' grit and sma',  
Frae God's ain priests the people's hearts  
He steals awa.  
An' whan we chasten'd him therefore,  
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,  
As set the warld in a roar

O' laughin' at us;—

Curse thou his basket and his store,  
Kail and potatoes.

Lord, hear my earnest cry and pray'r,  
Against the presbyt'ry of Ayr;

Thy strong right hand, Lord, mak it bare  
Upo' their heads,

Lord weigh it down, and dinna spare,  
For their misdeeds.

O Lord my God, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,  
My very heart and saul are quakin',

To think how we stood groanin', shakin',  
And swat wi' dread,

While Auld wi' hingin lips gaed sneakin'  
And hung his head.

Lord, in the day of vengeance try him,

Lord, visit them wha did employ him,  
And pass not in thy mercy by 'em,

Nor hear their pray'r;

But for thy people's sake destroy 'em,  
And dinna spare.

But, Lord, remember me an mine,

Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,

That I for gear and grace may shine,

Excell'd by nane,

And a' the glory shall be thine,

Amen, Amen!

## XVIII. EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE

[We are informed by Richmond of Mauchline, that when he was clerk in Gavin Hamilton's office, Burns came in one morning and said, "I have just composed a poem, John, and if you will write it, I will repeat it." He repeated Holy Willie's Prayer and Epitaph; Hamilton came in at the moment, and having read them with delight, ran laughing with them in his hand to Robert Aiken. The end of Holy Willie was other than godly; in one of his visits to Mauchline, he drank more than was needful, fell into a ditch on his way home, and was found dead in the morning.]

Here Holy Willie's sair worn clay  
Takes up its last abode;  
His saul has ta'en some other way,  
I fear the left-hand road.  
Stop! there he is, as sure's a gun,  
Poor, silly body, see him;  
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun,  
Observe wha's standing wi' him.  
Your brunstane devilship I see,  
Has got him there before ye;  
But hand your nine-tail cat a wee,  
Till ance you've heard my story.  
Your pity I will not implore,

For pity ye hae nane;  
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,  
And mercy's day is gaen.  
But hear me, sir, deil as ye are,  
Look something to your credit;  
A coof like him wad stain your name,  
If it were kent ye did it.

## **XIX. THE INVENTORY; IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE TAXES**

[We have heard of a poor play-actor who, by a humorous inventory of his effects, so moved the commissioners of the income tax, that they remitted all claim on him then and forever; we know not that this very humorous inventory of Burns had any such effect on Mr. Aiken, the surveyor of the taxes. It is dated "Mossgiel, February 22d, 1786," and is remarkable for wit and sprightliness, and for the information which it gives us of the poet's habits, household, and agricultural implements.]

Sir, as your mandate did request,  
I send you here a faithfu' list,  
O' gudes, an' gear, an' a' my graith,  
To which I'm clear to gi'e my aith.

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,  
I have four brutes o' gallant mettle,  
As ever drew afore a pettle.

My lan' afore's<sup>8</sup> a gude auld has been,  
An' wight, an' wilfu' a' his days been.

My lan ahin's<sup>9</sup> a weel gaun fillie,  
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie,<sup>10</sup>  
An' your auld burro' mony a time,  
In days when riding was nae crime—  
But ance, whan in my wooing pride,  
I like a blockhead boost to ride,  
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to,  
(L—d pardon a' my sins an' that too!)  
I play'd my fillie sic a shavie,  
She's a' bedevil'd with the spavie.

My fur ahin's<sup>11</sup> a wordy beast,  
As e'er in tug or tow was trac'd.  
The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie,

---

<sup>8</sup> The fore-horse on the left-hand in the plough.

<sup>9</sup> The hindmost on the left-hand in the plough.

<sup>10</sup> Kilmarnock.

<sup>11</sup> The hindmost horse on the right-hand in the plough.

A d—n'd red wud Kilburnie blastie!  
Forbye a cowt o' cowt's the wale,  
As ever ran afore a tail.  
If he be spar'd to be a beast,  
He'll draw me fifteen pun' at least.—  
Wheel carriages I ha'e but few,  
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new;  
Ae auld wheelbarrow, mair for token,  
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken;  
I made a poker o' the spin'le,  
An' my auld mither brunt the trin'le.  
For men I've three mischievous boys,  
Run de'ils for rantin' an' for noise;  
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t'other.  
Wee Davock hauds the nowt in fother.  
I rule them as I ought, discreetly,  
An' aften labour them completely;  
An' ay on Sundays, duly, nightly,  
I on the Questions targe them tightly;  
Till, faith, wee Davock's turn'd sae gleg,  
Tho' scarcely langer than your leg,  
He'll screed you aff Effectual calling,  
As fast as ony in the dwelling.  
I've nane in female servan' station,  
(Lord keep me ay frae a' temptation!)  
I ha'e nae wife—and that my bliss is,  
An' ye have laid nae tax on misses;  
An' then, if kirk folks dinna clutch me,

I ken the devils darena touch me.  
Wi' weans I'm mair than weel contented,  
Heav'n sent me ane mae than I wanted.  
My sonsie smirking dear-bought Bess,  
She stares the daddy in her face,  
Enough of ought ye like but grace;  
But her, my bonnie sweet wee lady,  
I've paid enough for her already,  
An' gin ye tax her or her mither,  
B' the L—d! ye'se get them a'thegither.  
And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,  
Nae kind of license out I'm takin';  
Frae this time forth, I do declare  
I'se ne'er ride horse nor hizzie mair;  
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle,  
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;  
My travel a' on foot I'll shank it,  
I've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit.  
The kirk and you may tak' you that,  
It puts but little in your pat;  
Sae dinna put me in your buke.  
Nor for my ten white shillings luke.  
This list wi' my ain hand I wrote it,  
the day and date as under noted;  
Then know all ye whom it concerns,  
Subscripsi huic

Robert Burns.

## XX. THE HOLY FAIR

*A robe of seeming truth and trust  
Did crafty observation;  
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,  
The dirk of Defamation:  
A mask that like the gorget show'd,  
Dye-varying on the pigeon;  
And for a mantle large and broad,  
He wrapt him in Religion.*

**Hypocrisy a-la-mode.**

[The scene of this fine poem is the church-yard of Mauchline, and the subject handled so cleverly and sharply is the laxity of manners visible in matters so solemn and terrible as the administration of the sacrament. "This was indeed," says Lockhart, "an extraordinary performance: no partisan of any sect could whisper that malice had formed its principal inspiration, or that its chief attraction lay in the boldness with which individuals, entitled and accustomed to respect, were held up to ridicule: it was acknowledged, amidst the sternest mutterings of wrath, that national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet." "It is no doubt," says Hogg, "a reckless piece of satire, but it is a clever one, and must have cut to the bone. But much as I admire the poem I must regret that it is partly borrowed from Ferguson."]



Upon a simmer Sunday morn,  
When Nature's face is fair,  
I walked forth to view the corn,  
An' snuff the caller air.  
The rising sun owre Galston muirs,  
Wi' glorious light was glintin';  
The hares were hirplin down the furs,  
The lav'rocks they were chantin'  
Fu' sweet that day.  
As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad,  
To see a scene sae gay,  
Three hizzies, early at the road,  
Cam skelpin up the way;  
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,  
But ane wi' lyart lining;  
The third, that gaed a-wee a-back,  
Was in the fashion shining  
Fu' gay that day.  
The twa appear'd like sisters twin,  
In feature, form, an' claes;  
Their visage, wither'd, lang, an' thin,  
An' sour as ony slaes:  
The third cam up, hap-step-an'-lowp,  
As light as ony lambie,  
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,  
As soon as e'er she saw me,  
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass,  
I think ye seem to ken me;  
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,  
But yet I canna name ye."

Quo' she, an' laughin' as she spak,  
An' taks me by the hands,  
"Ye, for my sake, hae gi'en the feck,  
Of a' the ten commands  
A screed some day.

"My name is Fun—your cronie dear,  
The nearest friend ye hae;  
An' this is Superstition here,  
An' that's Hypocrisy.

I'm gaun to Mauchline holy fair,  
To spend an hour in daffin:  
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair,  
We will get famous laughin'  
At them this day."

Quoth I, "With a' my heart I'll do't;  
I'll get my Sunday's sark on,  
An' meet you on the holy spot;  
Faith, we'se hae fine remarkin'!"  
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time  
An' soon I made me ready;  
For roads were clad, frae side to side,  
Wi' monie a wearie body,  
In droves that day.  
Here farmers gash, in ridin' graith

Gaed hoddin by their cottars;  
There, swankies young, in braw braid-claith,  
Are springin' o'er the gutters.  
The lasses, skelpin barefit, thrang,  
In silks an' scarlets glitter;  
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in monie a whang,  
An' farls bak'd wi' butter,  
Fu' crump that day.  
When by the plate we set our nose,  
Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence,  
A greedy glowr Black Bonnet throws,  
An' we maun draw our tippence.  
Then in we go to see the show,  
On ev'ry side they're gath'rin',  
Some carrying dails, some chairs an' stools,  
An' some are busy blethrin'  
Right loud that day.  
Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs,  
An' screen our countra gentry,  
There, racer Jess, and twa-three wh-res,  
Are blinkin' at the entry.  
Here sits a raw of titlin' jades,  
Wi' heaving breast and bare neck,  
An' there's a batch o' wabster lads,  
Blackguarding frae Kilmarnock  
For fun this day.  
Here some are thinkin' on their sins,  
An' some upo' their claes;

Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,  
Anither sighs an' prays:

On this hand sits a chosen swatch,  
Wi' screw'd up grace-proud faces;  
On that a set o' chaps at watch,  
Thrang winkin' on the lasses  
To chairs that day.

O happy is that man an' blest!

Nae wonder that it pride him!

Wha's ain dear lass that he likes best,

Comes clinkin' down beside him;

Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,

He sweetly does compose him;

Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,

An's loof upon her bosom,

Unkenn'd that day.

Now a' the congregation o'er

Is silent expectation;

For Moodie speeds the holy door,

Wi' tidings o' damnation.

Should Hornie, as in ancient days,

'Mang sons o' God present him,

The vera sight o' Moodie's face,

To's ain het hame had sent him

Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith

Wi' ratlin' an' wi' thumpin'!

Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,

He's stampin an' he's jumpin'!  
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,  
His eldritch squeel and gestures,  
Oh, how they fire the heart devout,  
Like cantharidian plasters,  
On sic a day.

But hark! the tent has chang'd its voice:  
There's peace an' rest nae langer:  
For a' the real judges rise,  
They canna sit for anger.  
Smith opens out his cauld harangues,  
On practice and on morals;  
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,  
To gie the jars an' barrels  
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine,  
Of moral pow'rs and reason?  
His English style, an' gestures fine,  
Are a' clean out o' season.  
Like Socrates or Antonine,  
Or some auld pagan heathen,  
The moral man he does define,  
But ne'er a word o' faith in  
That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote  
Against sic poison'd nostrum;  
For Peebles, frae the water-fit,  
Ascends the holy rostrum:

See, up he's got the word o' God,  
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,  
While Common-Sense has ta'en the road,  
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate,<sup>12</sup>  
Fast, fast, that day.

Wee Miller, neist the guard relieves,  
An' orthodoxy raibles,  
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,  
An' thinks it auld wives' fables:  
But faith! the birkie wants a manse,  
So, cannily he hums them;  
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense  
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him  
At times that day.

Now but an' ben, the Change-house fills,  
Wi' yill-caup commentators:  
Here's crying out for bakes and gills,  
An' there the pint-stowp clatters;  
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,  
Wi' logic, an' wi' scripture,  
They raise a din, that, in the end,  
Is like to breed a rupture  
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair  
Than either school or college:

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<sup>12</sup> A street so called, which faces the tent in Mauchline.

It kindles wit, it waukens lair,  
It pangs us fou' o' knowledge,  
Be't whisky gill, or penny wheep,  
Or any stronger potion,  
It never fails, on drinking deep,  
To kittle up our notion  
By night or day.  
The lads an' lasses, blythely bent  
To mind baith saul an' body,  
Sit round the table, weel content,  
An' steer about the toddy.  
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,  
They're making observations;  
While some are cozie i' the neuk,  
An' formin' assignations  
To meet some day.  
But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,  
Till a' the hills are rairin',  
An' echoes back return the shouts:  
Black Russell is na' sparin':  
His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,  
Divide the joints and marrow;  
His talk o' Hell, where devils dwell,  
Our vera sauls does harrow<sup>13</sup>  
Wi' fright that day.

---

13 Shakespeare's Hamlet.

A vast, unbottom'd boundless pit,  
Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane,  
Wha's ragin' flame, an' scorchin' heat,  
Wad melt the hardest whunstane!  
The half asleep start up wi' fear,  
An' think they hear it roarin',  
When presently it does appear,  
'Twas but some neibor snorin'  
Asleep that day.  
'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell  
How monie stories past,  
An' how they crowded to the yill,  
When they were a' dismiss:  
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups,  
Amang the furms an' benches:  
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,  
Was dealt about in lunches,  
An' dawds that day.  
In comes a gaucie, gash guidwife,  
An' sits down by the fire,  
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife;  
The lasses they are shyer.  
The auld guidmen, about the grace,  
Frae side to side they bother,  
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,  
An' gi'es them't like a tether,  
Fu' lang that day.  
Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,



Or lasses that hae naething;  
Sma' need has he to say a grace,  
Or melvie his brow claithing!  
O wives, be mindfu' ance yoursel  
How bonnie lads ye wanted,  
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel,  
Let lasses be affronted  
On sic a day!  
Now Clinkumbell, wi' ratlin tow,  
Begins to jow an' croon;  
Some swagger hame, the best they dow,  
Some wait the afternoon.  
At slaps the billies halt a blink,  
Till lasses strip their shoon:  
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,  
They're a' in famous tune  
For crack that day.  
How monie hearts this day converts  
O' sinners and o' lasses!  
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,  
As soft as ony flesh is.  
There's some are fou o' love divine;  
There's some are fou o' brandy;  
An' monie jobs that day begin  
May end in houghmagandie  
Some ither day.

## XXI. THE ORDINATION

*“For sense they little owe to frugal heav’n—  
To please the mob they hide the little giv’n.”*

[This sarcastic sally was written on the admission of Mr. Mackinlay, as one of the ministers to the Laigh, or parochial Kirk of Kilmarnock, on the 6th of April, 1786. That reverend person was an Auld Light professor, and his ordination incensed all the New Lights, hence the bitter levity of the poem. These dissensions have long since past away: Mackinlay, a pious and kind-hearted sincere man, lived down all the personalities of the satire, and though unwelcome at first, he soon learned to regard them only as a proof of the powers of the poet.]

Kilmarnock wabsters fidge an’ claw,  
An’ pour your creeshie nations;  
An’ ye wha leather rax an’ draw,  
Of a’ denominations,  
Swith to the Laigh Kirk, ane an’ a’,  
An’ there tak up your stations;  
Then aff to Begbie’s in a raw,  
An’ pour divine libations  
For joy this day.  
Curst Common-Sense, that imp o’ hell,

Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder;<sup>14</sup>  
But Oliphant aft made her yell,  
An' Russell sair misca'd her;  
This day Mackinlay taks the flail,  
And he's the boy will blaud her!  
He'll clap a shangan on her tail,  
An' set the bairns to daud her  
Wi' dirt this day.  
Mak haste an' turn King David owre,  
An' lilt wi' holy clangor;  
O' double verse come gie us four,  
An' skirl up the Bangor:  
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure,  
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,  
For Heresy is in her pow'r,  
And gloriously she'll whang her  
Wi' pith this day.  
Come, let a proper text be read,  
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,  
How graceless Ham<sup>15</sup> leugh at his dad,  
Which made Canaan a niger;

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<sup>14</sup> Alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late reverend and worthy Mr. Lindsay to the Laigh Kirk.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis, ix. 22.

Or Phineas<sup>16</sup> drove the murdering blade,  
Wi' wh-re-abhorring rigour;

Or Zipporah,<sup>17</sup> the scauldin' jad,  
Was like a bluidy tiger

I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,

And bind him down wi' caution,

That stipend is a carnal weed

He taks but for the fashion;

And gie him o'er the flock, to feed,

And punish each transgression;

Especial, rams that cross the breed,

Gie them sufficient threshin',

Spare them nae day.

Now, auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,

And toss thy horns fu' canty;

Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale,

Because thy pasture's scanty;

For lapfu's large o' gospel kail

Shall fill thy crib in plenty,

An' runts o' grace the pick and wale,

No gi'en by way o' dainty,

But ilka day.

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<sup>16</sup> Numbers, xxv. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus, iv. 25.

Nae mair by Babel's streams we'll weep,  
To think upon our Zion;  
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,  
Like baby-clouds a-dryin':  
Come, screw the pegs, wi' tunefu' cheep,  
And o'er the thairms be tryin';  
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,  
An' a' like lamb-tails flyin'  
Fu' fast this day!  
Lang Patronage, wi' rod o' airn,  
Has shor'd the Kirk's undoin',  
As lately Fenwick, sair forfairn,  
Has proven to its ruin:  
Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,  
He saw mischief was brewin';  
And like a godly elect bairn  
He's wal'd us out a true ane,  
And sound this day.  
Now, Robinson, harangue nae mair,  
But steek your gab for ever.  
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,  
For there they'll think you clever;  
Or, nae reflection on your lear,  
Ye may commence a shaver;  
Or to the Netherton repair,  
And turn a carpet-weaver  
Aff-hand this day.  
Mutrie and you were just a match

We never had sic twa drones:  
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,  
Just like a winkin' baudrons:  
And ay' he catch'd the tither wretch,  
To fry them in his caudrons;  
But now his honour maun detach,  
Wi' a' his brimstane squadrons,  
Fast, fast this day.  
See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes  
She's swingein' through the city;  
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!  
I vow it's unco pretty:  
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,  
Grunts out some Latin ditty;  
And Common Sense is gaun, she says,  
To mak to Jamie Beattie  
Her plaint this day.  
But there's Morality himsel',  
Embracing all opinions;  
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,  
Between his twa companions;  
See, how she peels the skin an' fell.  
As ane were peelin' onions!  
Now there—they're packed aff to hell,  
And banished our dominions,  
Henceforth this day.  
O, happy day! rejoice, rejoice!  
Come bouse about the porter!

Morality's demure decoys  
Shall here nae mair find quarter:  
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys,  
That Heresy can torture:  
They'll gie her on a rape a hoise,  
And cove her measure shorter  
By th' head some day.  
Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,  
And here's for a conclusion,  
To every New Light<sup>18</sup> mother's son,  
From this time forth Confusion:  
If mair they deave us wi' their din,  
Or Patronage intrusion,  
We'll light a spunk, and ev'ry skin,  
We'll rin them aff in fusion  
Like oil, some day.

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<sup>18</sup> "New Light" is a cant phrase in the West of Scotland, for those religions opinions which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended.

## XXII. THE CALF. TO THE REV. MR. JAMES STEVEN



*On his text, Malachi, iv. 2—“And ye shall go forth, and grow up as Calves of the stall.”*

[The laugh which this little poem raised against Steven was a loud one. Burns composed it during the sermon to which it relates and repeated it to Gavin Hamilton, with whom he happened on that day to dine. The Calf—for the name it seems stuck—came to London, where the younger brother of Burns heard him preach in Covent Garden Chapel, in 1796.]



Right, Sir! your text I'll prove it true,  
Though Heretics may laugh;  
For instance; there's yoursel' just now,  
God knows, an unco Calf!  
And should some patron be so kind,  
As bless you wi' a kirk,  
I doubt na, Sir, but then we'll find,  
Ye're still as great a Stirk.  
But, if the lover's raptur'd hour  
Shall ever be your lot,  
Forbid it, ev'ry heavenly power,  
You e'er should be a stot!  
Tho', when some kind, connubial dear,  
Your but-and-ben adorns,  
The like has been that you may wear  
A noble head of horns.  
And in your lug, most reverend James,  
To hear you roar and rowte,  
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims  
To rank among the nowte.  
And when ye're number'd wi' the dead,  
Below a grassy hillock,  
Wi' justice they may mark your head—  
“Here lies a famous Bullock!”

### XXIII. TO JAMES SMITH

*“Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!  
Sweet’ner of life and solder of society!  
I owe thee much!—“*

**Blair.**

[The James Smith, to whom this epistle is addressed, was at that time a small shop-keeper in Mauchline, and the comrade or rather follower of the poet in all his merry expeditions with “Yill-caup commentators.” He was present in Poesie Nansie’s when the Jolly Beggars first dawned on the fancy of Burns: the comrades of the poet’s heart were not generally very successful in life: Smith left Mauchline, and established a calico-printing manufactory at Avon near Linlithgow, where his friend found him in all appearance prosperous in 1788; but this was not to last; he failed in his speculations and went to the West Indies, and died early. His wit was ready, and his manners lively and unaffected.]

Dear Smith, the sleest, paukie thief,  
That e’er attempted stealth or rief,  
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef  
Owre human hearts;  
For ne’er a bosom yet was prief  
Against your arts.  
For me, I swear by sun an’ moon,

And ev'ry star that blinks aboon,  
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon  
Just gaun to see you;  
And ev'ry ither pair that's done,  
Mair ta'en I'm wi' you.  
That auld capricious carlin, Nature,  
To mak amends for scrimpit stature,  
She's turn'd you aff, a human creature  
On her first plan;  
And in her freaks, on every feature  
She's wrote, the Man.  
Just now I've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,  
My barmie noddle's working prime,  
My fancy yerkit it up sublime  
Wi' hasty summon:  
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time  
To hear what's comin'?  
Some rhyme a neighbour's name to lash;  
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash:  
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,  
An' raise a din;  
For me, an aim I never fash;  
I rhyme for fun.  
The star that rules my luckless lot,  
Has fated me the russet coat,  
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;  
But in requit,  
Has blest me with a random shot

O' countra wit.

This while my notion's ta'en a sklent,  
To try my fate in guid black prent;  
But still the mair I'm that way bent,  
Something cries "Hoolie!

I red you, honest man, tak tent!

Ye'll shaw your folly.

"There's ither poets much your betters,  
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,  
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors,  
A' future ages:

Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,  
Their unknown pages."

Then farewell hopes o' laurel-boughs,  
To garland my poetic brows!

Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs  
Are whistling thrang,

An' teach the lanely heights an' howes  
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, with tentless heed  
How never-halting moments speed,  
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;  
Then, all unknown,

I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,  
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?

Just now we're living sound and hale,  
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,

Heave care o'er side!  
And large, before enjoyment's gale,  
Let's tak the tide.  
This life, sae far's I understand,  
Is a' enchanted fairy land,  
Where pleasure is the magic wand,  
That, wielded right,  
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,  
Dance by fu' light.  
The magic wand then let us wield;  
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd,  
See crazy, weary, joyless eild,  
Wi' wrinkl'd face,  
Comes hostin', hirplin', owre the field,  
Wi' creepin' pace.  
When ance life's day draws near the gloamin',  
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin';  
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',  
An' social noise;  
An' fareweel dear, deluding woman!  
The joy of joys!  
O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,  
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!  
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,  
We frisk away,  
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,  
To joy and play.  
We wander there, we wander here,

We eye the rose upon the brier,  
Unmindful that the thorn is near,  
Among the leaves;  
And tho' the puny wound appear,  
Short while it grieves.  
Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,  
For which they never toil'd nor swat;  
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,  
But care or pain;  
And, haply, eye the barren hut  
With high disdain.  
With steady aim some Fortune chase;  
Keen hope does ev'ry sinew brace;  
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,  
And seize the prey;  
Then cannie, in some cozie place,  
They close the day.  
And others, like your humble servan',  
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin';  
To right or left, eternal swervin',  
They zig-zag on;  
'Till curst with age, obscure an' starvin',  
They aften groan.  
Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—  
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!  
Is fortune's fickle Luna waning?  
E'en let her gang!  
Beneath what light she has remaining,

Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,  
And kneel, "Ye Pow'rs," and warm implore,  
"Tho' I should wander terra e'er,

In all her climes,

Grant me but this, I ask no more,

Ay rowth o' rhymes.

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,

Till icicles hing frae their beards;

Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,

And maids of honour!

And yill an' whisky gie to cairds,

Until they sconner.

"A title, Dempster merits it;

A garter gie to Willie Pitt;

Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,

In cent. per cent.

But give me real, sterling wit,

And I'm content.

"While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,

I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,

Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,

Wi' cheerfu' face,

As lang's the muses dinna fail

To say the grace."

An anxious e'e I never throws

Behint my lug, or by my nose;

I jouk beneath misfortune's blows

As weel's I may;  
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,  
I rhyme away.  
O ye douce folk, that live by rule,  
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,  
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!  
How much unlike!  
Your hearts are just a standing pool,  
Your lives a dyke!  
Nae hair-brain'd, sentimental traces,  
In your unletter'd nameless faces!  
In arioso trills and graces  
Ye never stray,  
But gravissimo, solemn basses  
Ye hum away.  
Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;  
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise  
The hairum-scarum, ram-stam boys,  
The rattling squad:  
I see you upward cast your eyes—  
Ye ken the road—  
Whilst I—but I shall haud me there—  
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where—  
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,  
But quat my sang,  
Content wi' you to mak a pair,  
Whare'er I gang.



## XXIV. THE VISION. DUAN FIRST.<sup>19</sup>

[The Vision and the Briggs of Ayr, are said by Jeffrey to be “the only pieces by Burns which can be classed under the head of pure fiction:” but Tam O’ Shanter and twenty other of his compositions have an equal right to be classed with works of fiction. The edition of this poem published at Kilmarnock, differs in some particulars from the edition which followed in Edinburgh. The maiden whose foot was so handsome as to match that of Coila, was a Bess at first, but old affection triumphed, and Jean, for whom the honour was from the first designed, regained her place. The robe of Coila, too, was expanded, so far indeed that she got more cloth than she could well carry.]

The sun had clos’d the winter day,  
The curlers quat their roaring play,  
An’ hunger’d maukin ta’en her way  
To kail-yards green,  
While faithless snaws ilk step betray  
Whare she has been.

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<sup>19</sup> Duan, a term of Ossian’s for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his “Cath-Loda,” vol. ii. of Macpherson’s translation.

The thresher's weary flingin'-tree  
The lee-lang day had tired me;  
And when the day had closed his e'e  
Far i' the west,  
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,  
I gaed to rest.  
There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,  
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,  
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeeek,  
The auld clay biggin';  
An' heard the restless rattons squeak  
About the riggin'.  
All in this mottie, misty clime,  
I backward mused on wastet time,  
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,  
An' done nae thing,  
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,  
For fools to sing.  
Had I to guid advice but harkit,  
I might, by this hae led a market,  
Or strutted in a bank an' clarkit  
My cash-account:  
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,  
Is a' th' amount.  
I started, mutt'ring, blockhead! coof!  
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,  
To swear by a' yon starry roof,  
Or some rash aith,

That I, henceforth, would be rhyme-proof  
Till my last breath—  
When, click! the string the snick did draw:  
And, jee! the door gaed to the wa’;  
An’ by my ingle-lowe I saw,  
Now bleezin’ bright,  
A tight outlandish hizzie, braw  
Come full in sight.  
Ye need na doubt, I held my wisht;  
The infant aith, half-form’d, was crusht;  
I glowr’d as eerie’s I’d been dusht  
In some wild glen;  
When sweet, like modest worth, she blusht,  
And stepped ben.  
Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs  
Were twisted, gracefu’, round her brows,  
I took her for some Scottish Muse,  
By that same token;  
An’ come to stop those reckless vows,  
Wou’d soon be broken.  
A “hair-brain’d, sentimental trace”  
Was strongly marked in her face;  
A wildly-witty, rustic grace  
Shone full upon her:  
Her eye, ev’n turn’d on empty space,  
Beam’d keen with honour.  
Down flow’d her robe, a tartan sheen,  
’Till half a leg was scrimply seen:

And such a leg! my bonnie Jean  
Could only peer it;  
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,  
Nane else came near it.  
Her mantle large, of greenish hue,  
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;  
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw  
A lustre grand;  
And seem'd to my astonish'd view,  
A well-known land.  
Here, rivers in the sea were lost;  
There, mountains to the skies were tost:  
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,  
With surging foam;  
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,  
The lordly dome.  
Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;  
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:  
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,  
On to the shore;  
And many a lesser torrent scuds,  
With seeming roar.  
Low, in a sandy valley spread,  
An ancient borough rear'd her head;  
Still, as in Scottish story read,  
She boasts a race,  
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,  
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r, or palace fair,  
Or ruins pendent in the air,  
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,  
I could discern;  
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,  
With feature stern.  
My heart did glowing transport feel,  
To see a race<sup>20</sup> heroic wheel,  
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel  
In sturdy blows;  
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel  
Their southron foes.  
His Country's Saviour,<sup>21</sup> mark him well!  
Bold Richardton's<sup>22</sup> heroic swell;  
The chief on Sark<sup>23</sup> who glorious fell,

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<sup>20</sup> The Wallaces.

<sup>21</sup> Sir William Wallace.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Wallace, of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.

<sup>23</sup> Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought anno 1448. That glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.

In high command;  
And He whom ruthless fates expel  
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd Pictish shade<sup>24</sup>  
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,  
I mark'd a martial race portray'd  
In colours strong;  
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd  
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild romantic grove,<sup>25</sup>  
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,  
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,)  
In musing mood,  
An aged judge, I saw him rove,  
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial-place is still shown.

<sup>25</sup> Barskimming, the seat of the late Lord Justice-Clerk (Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, afterwards President of the Court of Session.)

<sup>26</sup> Catrine, the seat of Professor Dugald Steward.

The learned sire and son I saw,  
To Nature's God and Nature's law,  
They gave their lore,  
This, all its source and end to draw;  
That, to adore.

Brydone's brave ward<sup>27</sup> I well could spy,  
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;  
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,  
To hand him on,  
Where many a Patriot-name on high  
And hero shone.

#### DUAN SECOND

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,  
I view'd the heavenly-seeming fair;  
A whisp'ring throb did witness bear  
Of kindred sweet,  
When with an elder sister's air  
She did me greet.

“All hail! My own inspired bard!  
In me thy native Muse regard!  
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,  
Thus poorly low!  
I come to give thee such reward  
As we bestow.

“Know, the great genius of this land,

---

<sup>27</sup> Colonel Fullarton.

Has many a light aërial band,  
Who, all beneath his high command,  
Harmoniously,  
As arts or arms they understand,  
Their labours ply.

“They Scotia’s race among them share;  
Some fire the soldier on to dare;  
Some rouse the patriot up to bare  
Corruption’s heart.

Some teach the bard, a darling care,  
The tuneful art.

““Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,  
They, ardent, kindling spirits, pour;  
Or ‘mid the venal senate’s roar,  
They, sightless, stand,  
To mend the honest patriot-lore,  
And grace the hand.

“And when the bard, or hoary sage,  
Charm or instruct the future age,  
They bind the wild, poetic rage  
In energy,  
Or point the inconclusive page  
Full on the eye.

“Hence Fullarton, the brave and young;  
Hence Dempster’s zeal-inspired tongue;  
Hence sweet harmonious Beattie sung  
His ‘Minstrel’ lays;  
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,



The sceptic's bays.

“To lower orders are assign'd

The humbler ranks of human-kind,

The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,

The artisan;

All choose, as various they're inclin'd

The various man.

“When yellow waves the heavy grain,

The threat'ning storm some, strongly, rein;

Some teach to meliorate the plain,

With tillage-skill;

And some instruct the shepherd-train,

Blythe o'er the hill.

“Some hint the lover's harmless wile;

Some grace the maiden's artless smile;

Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil,

For humble gains,

And make his cottage-scenes beguile

His cares and pains.

“Some, bounded to a district-space,

Explore at large man's infant race,

To mark the embryotic trace

Of rustic bard:

And careful note each op'ning grace,

A guide and guard.

“Of these am I—Coila my name;

And this district as mine I claim,

Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,

Held ruling pow'r:

I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame,  
Thy natal hour.

“With future hope, I oft would gaze,  
Fond, on thy little early ways,  
Thy rudely carroll'd, chiming phrase,  
In uncouth rhymes,  
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays  
Of other times.

“I saw thee seek the sounding shore,  
Delighted with the dashing roar;  
Or when the north his fleecy store  
Drove through the sky,  
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar  
Struck thy young eye.

“Or when the deep green-mantled earth  
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,  
And joy and music pouring forth  
In ev'ry grove,  
I saw thee eye the general mirth  
With boundless love.

“When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,  
Called forth the reaper's rustling noise,  
I saw thee leave their evening joys,  
And lonely stalk,  
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise  
In pensive walk.

“When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,

Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,  
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,  
Th' adored Name

I taught thee how to pour in song,  
To soothe thy flame.

“I saw thy pulse's maddening play,  
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,  
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,  
By passion driven;  
But yet the light that led astray  
Was light from Heaven.

“I taught thy manners-painting strains,  
The loves, the ways of simple swains,  
Till now, o'er all my wide domains  
Thy fame extends;  
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,  
Become thy friends.

“Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,  
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;  
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,  
With Shenstone's art;  
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow,  
Warm on the heart.

“Yet, all beneath the unrivall'd rose,  
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;  
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws  
His army shade,  
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,

Adown the glade.

“Then never murmur nor repine;  
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;  
And, trust me, not Potosi’s mine,  
Nor king’s regard,  
Can give a bliss o’ermatching thine,  
A rustic bard.

“To give my counsels all in one,  
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;  
Preserve the dignity of man,  
With soul erect;  
And trust, the universal plan  
Will all protect.

“And wear thou this,”—she solemn said,  
And bound the holly round my head:  
The polish’d leaves and berries red  
Did rustling play;  
And like a passing thought, she fled  
In light away.

## XXV. HALLOWEEN<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings are all abroad on their baneful midnight errands: particularly those aerial people, the Fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.

*“Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,  
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;  
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,  
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.”*

**Goldsmith.**

[This Poem contains a lively and striking picture of some of the superstitious observances of old Scotland: on Halloween the desire to look into futurity was once all but universal in the north; and the charms and spells which Burns describes, form but a portion of those employed to enable the peasantry to have a peep up the dark vista of the future. The scene is laid on the romantic shores of Ayr, at a farmer’s fireside, and the actors in the rustic drama are the whole household, including supernumerary reapers and bandsmen about to be discharged from the engagements of harvest. “I never can help regarding this,” says James Hogg, “as rather a trivial poem!”]

Upon that night, when fairies light  
On Cassilis Downans<sup>29</sup> dance,  
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,

---

<sup>29</sup> Certain little, romantic, rocky green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.

On sprightly coursers prance;  
Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,  
Beneath the moon's pale beams;  
There, up the Cove,<sup>30</sup> to stray an' rove  
Amang the rocks an' streams  
To sport that night.

Amang the bonnie winding banks  
Where Doon rins, wimplin', clear,  
Where Bruce<sup>31</sup> ance rul'd the martial ranks,  
An' shook his Carrick spear,  
Some merry, friendly, countra folks,  
Together did convene,  
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,  
An' haud their Halloween  
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,  
Mair braw than when they're fine;  
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe,  
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin';  
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer babs,

---

<sup>30</sup> A noted cavern near Colean-house, called the Cove of Colean which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.

<sup>31</sup> The famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.

Weel knotted on their garten,  
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs,  
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'  
Whiles fast at night.

Then, first and foremost, thro' the kail,  
Their stocks<sup>32</sup> maun a' be sought ance;  
They steek their een, an' graip an' wale,  
For muckle anes an' straught anes.  
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,  
An' wander'd through the bow-kail,  
An' pou't, for want o' better shift,  
A runt was like a sow-tail,  
Sae bow't that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,  
They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;  
The vera wee-things, todlin', rin

---

<sup>32</sup> The first ceremony of Halloween is pulling each a stock, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand-in-hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any yird, or earth, stick to the root, that is tocher, or fortune; and the taste of the custoc, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their ordinary appellation, the runts, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house are, according to the priority of placing the runts, the names in question.

Wi' stocks out-owre their shouter;  
An' gif the custoc's sweet or sour,  
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;  
Syne coziely, aboon the door,  
Wi' cannie care, they've placed them  
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae mang them a'  
To pou their stalks o' corn;<sup>33</sup>  
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,  
Behint the muckle thorn:  
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;  
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;  
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,  
When kiuttlin' in the fause-house<sup>34</sup>  
Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's weel hoordet nits<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> They go to the barn-yard, and pull each at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the top-pickle, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid.

<sup>34</sup> When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a fause-house.

<sup>35</sup> Burning the nuts is a famous charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and



Are round an' round divided;  
An' monie lads' an' lasses' fates  
Are there that night decided:  
Some kindle, couthie, side by side,  
An' burn thegither trimly;  
Some start awa' wi' saucy pride,  
And jump out-owre the chimlie  
Fu' high that night.  
Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e;  
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;  
But this is Jock, an' this is me,  
She says in to hersel':  
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,  
As they wad never mair part;  
'Till, fuff! he started up the lum,  
An' Jean had e'en a sair heart  
To see't that night.  
Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,  
Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie;  
An' Mallie, nae doubt, took the drunt,  
To be compar'd to Willie;  
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,  
An' her ain fit it brunt it;  
While Willie lap, and swear, by jing,

---

according as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.

'Twas just the way he wanted  
To be that night.  
Nell had the fause-house in her min',  
She pits hersel an' Rob in;  
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,  
'Till white in ase they're sobbin';  
Nell's heart, was dancin' at the view,  
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't:  
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonie mou',  
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,  
Unseen that night.  
But Merran sat behind their backs,  
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;  
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks,  
And slips out by hersel':  
She through the yard the nearest taks,  
An' to the kiln she goes then,  
An' darklins graipit for the bauks,  
And in the blue-clue<sup>36</sup> throws then,  
Right fear't that night.

---

<sup>36</sup> Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions: Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the pot a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a clue off the old one; and towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand "wha hauds?" i.e. who holds? an answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.

An' ay she win't, an' ay she swat,  
I wat she made nae jaukin';  
'Till something held within the pat,  
Guid L—d! but she was quaukin'!  
But whether 'twas the Deil himsel',  
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',  
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,  
She did na wait on talkin'  
To spier that night.

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,  
“Will ye go wi' me, graunie?”

I'll eat the apple<sup>37</sup> at the glass,  
I gat frae uncle Johnnie:”

She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,  
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',  
She notic't na, an aizle brunt  
Her braw new worset apron  
Out thro' that night.

“Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!  
I daur you try sic sportin',  
As seek the foul Thief onie place,  
For him to spae your fortune:

---

<sup>37</sup> Take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, to be, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!  
Great cause ye hae to fear it;  
For monie a ane has gotten a fright,  
An' liv'd an' died deleeret  
On sic a night.  
“Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,  
I mind't as weel's yestreen,  
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure  
I was na past fifteen:  
The simmer had been cauld an' wat,  
An' stuff was unco green;  
An' ay a rantin' kirn we gat,  
An' just on Halloween  
It fell that night.  
“Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,  
A clever, sturdy fellow:  
He's sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,  
That liv'd in Achmacalla:  
He gat hemp-seed,<sup>38</sup> I mind it weel,

---

<sup>38</sup> Steal out unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then, “Hemp-seed, I saw thee; hemp-seed, I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true love, come after me and pou thee.” Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, “Come after me, and shaw thee,” that is, show thyself; in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, “Come after me, and harrow thee.”

And he made unco light o't;  
But monie a day was by himsel',  
He was sae sairly frightened  
That vera night."

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,  
An' he swoor by his conscience,  
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;  
For it was a' but nonsense;  
The auld guidman raught down the pock,  
An' out a' handfu' gied him;  
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,  
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,  
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,  
Tho' he was something sturtin';  
The graip he for a harrow taks,  
An' hurls at his curpin;  
An' ev'ry now an' then he says,  
"Hemp-seed, I saw thee,  
An' her that is to be my lass,  
Come after me, an' draw thee  
As fast that night."

He whistl'd up Lord Lennox' march,  
To keep his courage cheery;  
Altho' his hair began to arch,  
He was sae fley'd an' eerie;

---

'Till presently he hears a squeak,  
An' then a grane an' gruntle;  
He by his shouther gae a keek,  
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle  
Out-owre that night.  
He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,  
In dreadfu' desperation!  
An' young an' auld cam rinnin' out,  
An' hear the sad narration;  
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,  
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,  
'Till, stop! she trotted thro' them a';  
An' wha was it but Grumphie  
Aster that night!  
Meg fain wad to the barn hae gaen,  
To win three wechts o' naething;<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> This charm must likewise be performed, unperceived, and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear may shut the doors and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a wecht; and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time, an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue marking the employment or station in life.

But for to meet the deil her lane,  
She pat but little faith in:  
She gies the herd a pickle nits,  
An' twa red cheekit apples,  
To watch, while for the barn she sets,  
In hopes to see Tam Kipples  
That vera night.  
She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,  
An' owre the threshold ventures;  
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',  
Syne bauldly in she enters:  
A ratton rattled up the wa',  
An' she cried, L—d preserve her!  
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',  
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,  
Fu' fast that night.  
They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;  
They hecht him some fine brow ane;  
It chanc'd the stack he faddom't thrice,<sup>40</sup>  
Was timmer-propt for thrawin';  
He taks a swirlie auld moss-oak,  
For some black, grousome carlin;

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<sup>40</sup> Take an opportunity of going unnoticed, to a bean stack, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.

An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,  
'Till skin in blypes cam haulin'  
Aff's nieves that night.  
A wanton widow Leezie was,  
As canty as a kittlin;  
But, och! that night, amang the shaws,  
She got a fearfu' settlin'!  
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,  
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin,  
Whare three lairds' lands met at a burn,<sup>41</sup>  
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,  
Was bent that night.  
Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,  
As through the glen it wimpl't;  
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays,  
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;  
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,  
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;  
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,  
Below the spreading hazel,

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<sup>41</sup> You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt-sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake: and, some time near midnight, an apparition having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.



Unseen that night.  
Amang the brackens on the brae,  
Between her an' the moon,  
The deil, or else an outler quey,  
Gat up an' gae a croon:  
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool!  
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,  
But mist a fit, an' in the pool  
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,  
Wi' a plunge that night.  
In order, on the clean hearth-stane,  
The luggies three<sup>42</sup> are ranged,  
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,  
To see them duly changed:  
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys  
Sin Mar's-year did desire,  
Because he gat the toom-dish thrice,  
He heav'd them on the fire  
In wrath that night.

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<sup>42</sup> Take three dishes: put clean water in one, foul water in another, and leave the third empty; blindfold a person and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.

Wi' merry sangs, and friendly cracks,  
I wat they did na weary;  
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes,  
Their sports were cheap an' cheery;  
Till butter'd so'ns<sup>43</sup> wi' fragrant lunt,  
Set a' their gabs a-steerin';  
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,  
They parted aff careerin'  
Fu' blythe that night.

## XXVI. MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN. A DIRGE

[The origin of this fine poem is alluded to by Burns in one of his letters to Mrs. Dunlop: "I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived in her girlish years: the good old man was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of 'The Life and Age of Man.'" From that truly venerable woman, long after the death of her distinguished son, Cromek, in collecting the Reliques, obtained a copy by recitation of the older strain. Though the tone and

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<sup>43</sup> Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween supper.

sentiment coincide closely with “Man was made to Mourn,” I agree with Lockhart, that Burns wrote it in obedience to his own habitual feelings.]

When chill November's surly blast  
Made fields and forests bare,  
One ev'ning as I wandered forth  
Along the banks of Ayr,  
I spy'd a man whose aged step  
Seem'd weary, worn with care;  
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,  
And hoary was his hair.  
“Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?”  
Began the rev'rend sage;  
“Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,  
Or youthful pleasure's rage?  
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,  
Too soon thou hast begun  
To wander forth, with me to mourn  
The miseries of man.  
“The sun that overhangs yon moors,  
Out-spreading far and wide,  
Where hundreds labour to support  
A haughty lordling's pride:  
I've seen yon weary winter-sun  
Twice forty times return,  
And ev'ry time had added proofs  
That man was made to mourn.

“O man! while in thy early years,  
How prodigal of time!  
Misspending all thy precious hours,  
Thy glorious youthful prime!  
Alternate follies take the sway;  
Licentious passions burn;  
Which tenfold force gives nature’s law,  
That man was made to mourn.  
“Look not alone on youthful prime,  
Or manhood’s active might;  
Man then is useful to his kind,  
Supported in his right:  
But see him on the edge of life,  
With cares and sorrows worn;  
Then age and want—oh! ill-match’d pair!—  
Show man was made to mourn.  
“A few seem favorites of fate,  
In pleasure’s lap carest:  
Yet, think not all the rich and great  
Are likewise truly blest.  
But, oh! what crowds in every land,  
All wretched and forlorn!  
Thro’ weary life this lesson learn—  
That man was made to mourn.  
“Many and sharp the num’rous ills  
Inwoven with our frame!  
More pointed still we make ourselves,  
Regret, remorse, and shame!

And man, whose heaven-erected face  
The smiles of love adorn,  
Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn!  
"See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,  
So abject, mean, and vile,  
Who begs a brother of the earth  
To give him leave to toil;  
And see his lordly fellow-worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful, though a weeping wife  
And helpless offspring mourn.  
"If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—  
By Nature's law design'd—  
Why was an independent wish  
E'er planted in my mind?  
If not, why am I subject to  
His cruelty or scorn?  
Or why has man the will and power  
To make his fellow mourn?  
"Yet, let not this too much, my son,  
Disturb thy youthful breast;  
This partial view of human-kind  
Is surely not the best!  
The poor, oppressed, honest man  
Had never, sure, been born,  
Had there not been some recompense  
To comfort those that mourn!

“O Death! the poor man’s dearest friend—  
The kindest and the best!  
Welcome the hour, my aged limbs  
Are laid with thee at rest!  
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,  
From pomp and pleasure torn!  
But, oh! a blest relief to those  
That weary-laden mourn.”

## XXVII. TO RUIN

[“I have been,” says Burns, in his common-place book, “taking a peep through, as Young finely says, ‘The dark postern of time long elapsed.’ ’Twas a rueful prospect! What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! my life reminded me of a ruined temple. What strength, what proportion in some parts, what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others!” The fragment, To Ruin, seems to have had its origin in moments such as these.]

I.

All hail! inexorable lord!  
At whose destruction-breathing word,  
The mightiest empires fall!  
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,  
The ministers of grief and pain,

A sullen welcome, all!  
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,  
I see each aimed dart;  
For one has cut my dearest tie,  
And quivers in my heart.  
Then low'ring and pouring,  
The storm no more I dread;  
Though thick'ning and black'ning,  
Round my devoted head.

II.

And thou grim pow'r, by life abhorr'd,  
While life a pleasure can afford,  
Oh! hear a wretch's prayer!  
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid;  
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,  
To close this scene of care!  
When shall my soul, in silent peace,  
Resign life's joyless day;  
My weary heart its throbbings cease,  
Cold mould'ring in the clay?  
No fear more, no tear more,  
To stain my lifeless face;  
Enclasped, and grasped  
Within thy cold embrace!

**XXVIII. TO JOHN GOUDIE OF  
KILMARNOCK. ON THE PUBLICATION OF**

## HIS ESSAYS

[This burning commentary, by Burns, on the Essays of Goudie in the Macgill controversy, was first published by Stewart, with the Jolly Beggars, in 1801; it is akin in life and spirit to Holy Willie's Prayer; and may be cited as a sample of the wit and the force which the poet brought to the great, but now forgotten, controversy of the West.]

O Goudie! terror of the Whigs,  
Dread of black coats and rev'rend wigs,  
Sour Bigotry, on her last legs,  
Girnin', looks back,  
Wishin' the ten Egyptian plagues  
Wad seize you quick.  
Poor gapin', glowrin' Superstition,  
Waes me! she's in a sad condition:  
Fie! bring Black Jock, her state physician,  
To see her water:  
Alas! there's ground o' great suspicion  
She'll ne'er get better.  
Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,  
But now she's got an unco ripple;  
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,  
Nigh unto death;  
See, how she fetches at the thrapple,  
An' gasps for breath.



Enthusiasm's past redemption,  
Gaen in a gallopin' consumption,  
Not a' the quacks, wi' a' their gumption,  
Will ever mend her.  
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption  
Death soon will end her.  
'Tis you and Taylor<sup>44</sup> are the chief,  
Wha are to blame for this mischief,  
But gin the Lord's ain focks gat leave,  
A toom tar-barrel,  
An' twa red peats wad send relief,  
An' end the quarrel.

## XXIX. TO J. LAPRAIK. AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD

*April 1st, 1785.*

### (FIRST EPISTLE)

["The epistle to John Lapraik," says Gilbert Burns, "was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. Rocking is a term derived from

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<sup>44</sup> Dr. Taylor, of Norwich.

primitive times, when our country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on the roke or distaff. This simple instrument is a very portable one; and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of going a rocking, or with the roke. As the connexion the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the roke gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rokes as well as women.”]

While briers an' woodbines budding green,  
An' pairicks scraichin' loud at e'en,  
An' morning poussie whidden seen,  
Inspire my muse,  
This freedom in an unknown frien'  
I pray excuse.  
On Fasten-een we had a rockin',  
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin',  
And there was muckle fun an' jokin',  
Ye need na doubt;  
At length we had a hearty yokin'  
At sang about.  
There was ae sang, amang the rest,  
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,  
That some kind husband had address  
To some sweet wife;  
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,

A' to the life.

I've scarce heard aught describ'd sae weel,  
What gen'rous manly bosoms feel,  
Thought I, "Can this be Pope or Steele,  
Or Beattie's wark?"

They told me 'twas an odd kind chiel  
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear't,  
And sae about him there I spier't,  
Then a' that ken't him round declar'd  
He had injine,  
That, nane excell'd it, few cam near't,  
It was sae fine.

That, set him to a pint of ale,  
An' either douce or merry tale,  
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel',  
Or witty catches,  
'Tween Inverness and Tiviotdale,  
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,  
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith,  
Or die a cadger pownie's death  
At some dyke-back,  
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith  
To hear your crack.

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,  
Amaist as soon as I could spell,  
I to the crambo-jingle fell,

Tho' rude an' rough,  
Yet crooning to a body's sel',  
Does weel eneugh.  
I am nae poet in a sense,  
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,  
An' hae to learning nae pretence,  
Yet what the matter?  
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,  
I jingle at her.  
Your critic-folk may cock their nose,  
And say, "How can you e'er propose,  
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,  
To mak a sang?"  
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,  
Ye're may-be wrang.  
What's a' your jargon o' your schools,  
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;  
If honest nature made you fools,  
What sairs your grammars?  
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,  
Or knappin-hammers.  
A set o' dull, conceited hashes,  
Confuse their brains in college classes!  
They gang in stirks and come out asses,  
Plain truth to speak;  
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus  
By dint o' Greek!  
Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!

That's a' the learning I desire;  
Then though I drudge thro' dub an' mire  
At pleugh or cart,  
My muse, though hamely in attire,  
May touch the heart.  
O for a spunk o' Allan's glee,  
Or Fergusson's, the bauld and slee,  
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,  
If I can hit it!  
That would be lear eneugh for me,  
If I could get it.  
Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,  
Tho' real friends, I b'lieve, are few,  
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,  
I'se no insist,  
But gif ye want ae friend that's true—  
I'm on your list.  
I winna blaw about mysel;  
As ill I like my fauts to tell;  
But friends an' folk that wish me well,  
They sometimes roose me;  
Tho' I maun own, as monie still  
As far abuse me.  
There's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me,  
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!  
For monie a plack they wheedle frae me,  
At dance or fair;  
May be some ither thing they gie me

They weel can spare.  
But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair;  
I should be proud to meet you there!  
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,  
If we forgather,  
An' hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware  
Wi' ane anither.  
The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,  
An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water;  
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,  
To cheer our heart;  
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better,  
Before we part.  
Awa, ye selfish, warly race,  
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace,  
Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place  
To catch-the-plack!  
I dinna like to see your face,  
Nor hear your crack.  
But ye whom social pleasure charms,  
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,  
Who hold your being on the terms,  
"Each aid the others,"  
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,  
My friends, my brothers!  
But, to conclude my lang epistle,  
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle;  
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fistle,

Who am, most fervent,  
While I can either sing or whistle,  
Your friend and servant.

## XXX. TO J. LAPRAIK



(SECOND EPISTLE.)

[The John Lapraik to whom these epistles are addressed lived at Dalfram in the neighbourhood of Muirkirk, and was a rustic worshipper of the Muse: he unluckily, however, involved himself in that Western bubble, the Ayr Bank, and consoled himself by composing in his distress that song which moved the heart of Burns, beginning

*“When I upon thy bosom lean.”*

He afterwards published a volume of verse, of a



quality which proved that the inspiration in his song of domestic sorrow was no settled power of soul.]

*April 21st, 1785.*

While new-ca'd ky, rowte at the stake,  
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,  
This hour on e'enin's edge I take  
To own I'm debtor,  
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,  
For his kind letter.  
Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs,  
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs,  
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs  
Their ten hours' bite,  
My awkart muse sair pleads and begs,  
I would na write.  
The tapetless ramfeezi'd hizzie,  
She's saft at best, and something lazy,  
Quo' she, "Ye ken, we've been sae busy,  
This month' an' mair,  
That trowth, my head is grown right dizzie,  
An' something sair."  
Her dowff excuses pat me mad:  
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad!  
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud,  
This vera night;  
So dinna ye affront your trade,  
But rhyme it right.

“Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o’ hearts,  
Tho’ mankind were a pack o’ cartes,  
Roose you sae weel for your deserts,  
In terms sae friendly,  
Yet ye’ll neglect to show your parts,  
An’ thank him kindly?”  
Sae I gat paper in a blink  
An’ down gaed stumpie in the ink:  
Quoth I, “Before I sleep a wink,  
I vow I’ll close it;  
An’ if ye winna mak it clink,  
By Jove I’ll prose it!”  
Sae I’ve begun to scrawl, but whether  
In rhyme or prose, or baith thegither,  
Or some hotch-potch that’s rightly neither,  
Let time mak proof;  
But I shall scribble down some blether  
Just clean aff-loof.  
My worthy friend, ne’er grudge an’ carp,  
Tho’ fortune use you hard an’ sharp;  
Come, kittle up your moorland-harp  
Wi’ gleesome touch!  
Ne’er mind how fortune waft an’ warp;  
She’s but a b—tch.  
She’s gien me monie a jirt an’ fleg,  
Sin’ I could striddle owre a rig;  
But, by the L—d, tho’ I should beg  
Wi’ lyart pow,

I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,  
As lang's I dow!  
Now comes the sax an' twentieth simmer,  
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,  
Still persecuted by the limmer  
Frae year to year;  
But yet despite the kittle kimmer,  
I, Rob, am here.  
Do ye envy the city gent,  
Behint a kist to lie and sklent,  
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.  
And muckle wame,  
In some bit brugh to represent  
A bailie's name?  
Or is't the paughty, feudal Thane,  
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancing cane,  
Wha thinks himsel nae sheep-shank bane,  
But lordly stalks,  
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,  
As by he walks!  
"O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!  
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,  
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,  
Thro' Scotland wide;  
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,  
In a' their pride!"  
Were this the charter of our state,  
"On pain' o' hell be rich an' great,"

Damnation then would be our fate,  
Beyond remead;  
But, thanks to Heav'n, that's no the gate  
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,  
When first the human race began,  
"The social, friendly, honest man,  
Whate'er he be,  
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,  
An' none but he!"

O mandate, glorious and divine!  
The followers o' the ragged Nine,  
Poor thoughtless devils! yet may shine  
In glorious light,  
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line  
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,  
Their worthless nievfu' of a soul  
May in some future carcass howl  
The forest's fright;  
Or in some day-detesting owl  
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,  
To reach their native kindred skies,  
And sing their pleasures, hopes, an' joys,  
In some mild sphere,  
Still closer knit in friendship's ties  
Each passing year!

## XXXI. TO J. LAPRAIK

### (THIRD EPISTLE)

[I have heard one of our most distinguished English poets recite with a sort of ecstasy some of the verses of these epistles, and praise the ease of the language and the happiness of the thoughts. He averred, however, that the poet, when pinched for a word, hesitated not to coin one, and instanced, “tapetless,” “ramfeezled,” and “forjesket,” as intrusions in our dialect. These words seem indeed, to some Scotchmen, strange and uncouth, but they are true words of the west.]

*Sept. 13th, 1785.*

Guid speed an' funder to you, Johnny,  
Guid health, hale han's, an' weather bonny;  
Now when ye're nickan down fu' canny  
The staff o' bread,  
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y  
To clear your head.  
May Boreas never thresh your rigs,  
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs,  
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs an' haggis  
Like drivin' wrack;  
But may the tapmast grain that wags

Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie too, an' skelpin' at it,  
But bitter, daudin' showers hae wat it,  
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it  
Wi' muckle wark,  
An' took my jocteleg an' whatt it,  
Like ony clark.

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor  
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter,  
Abusin' me for harsh ill nature  
On holy men,  
While deil a hair yoursel' ye're better,  
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,  
Let's sing about our noble sel's;  
We'll cry nae jads frae heathen hills  
To help, or roose us,  
But browster wives an' whiskey stills,  
They are the muses.

Your friendship, Sir, I winna quat it  
An' if ye mak' objections at it,  
Then han' in nieve some day we'll knot it,  
An' witness take,  
An' when wi' Usquabae we've wat it  
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd  
Till kye be gaun without the herd,  
An' a' the vittel in the yard,

An' theekit right,  
I mean your ingle-side to guard  
Ae winter night.  
Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ  
Shall make us baith sae blythe an' witty,  
Till ye forget ye're auld an' gatty,  
An' be as canty,  
As ye were nine year less than thretty,  
Sweet ane an' twenty!  
But stooks are cowpet wi' the blast,  
An' now the sin keeks in the west,  
Then I maun rin amang the rest  
An' quat my chanter;  
Sae I subscribe myself in haste,  
Yours, Rab the Ranter.

## **XXXII. TO WILLIAM SIMPSON, OCHILTREE**

[The person to whom this epistle is addressed, was schoolmaster of Ochiltree, and afterwards of New Lanark: he was a writer of verses too, like many more of the poet's comrades;—of verses which rose not above the barren level of mediocrity: “one of his poems,” says Chambers, “was a laughable elegy on the death of the Emperor Paul.” In his verses to Burns, under the name of a Tailor, there is nothing to laugh at, though they are intended to be laughable as well as

monitory.]

*May, 1785.*

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;  
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;  
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,  
An' unco vain,  
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie,  
Your flatterin' strain.  
But I'se believe ye kindly meant it,  
I sud be laith to think ye hinted  
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented  
On my poor Musie;  
Tho' in sic phraisin' terms ye've penn'd it,  
I scarce excuse ye.  
My senses wad be in a creel,  
Should I but dare a hope to speel,  
Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield,  
The braes o' fame;  
Or Fergusson, the writer chiel,  
A deathless name.  
(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts  
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!  
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,  
Ye Enbrugh gentry!  
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes  
Wad stow'd his pantry!)  
Yet when a tale comes i' my head,



Or lasses gie my heart a screed,  
As whiles they're like to be my dead  
(O sad disease!)

I kittle up my rustic reed,  
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila, now, may fidge fu' fain,  
She's gotten poets o' her ain,  
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,  
But tune their lays,  
Till echoes a' resound again  
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,  
To set her name in measur'd stile;  
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle  
Beside New-Holland,

Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil  
Besouth Magellan.

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson  
Gied Forth and Tay a lift aboon;  
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,  
Owre Scotland rings,  
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon,  
Nae body sings.

Th' Ilissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,  
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!

But, Willie, set your fit to mine,  
An' cock your crest,  
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine

Up wi' the best.  
We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,  
Her moor's red-brown wi' heather bells,  
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,  
Where glorious Wallace  
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,  
Frae southron billies.  
At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood  
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!  
Oft have our fearless fathers strode  
By Wallace' side,  
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,  
Or glorious dy'd.  
O sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,  
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,  
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids  
Their loves enjoy,  
While thro' the braes the cushat croods  
With wailfu' cry!  
Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me  
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;  
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree  
Are hoary gray:  
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,  
Dark'ning the day.  
O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms  
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!  
Whether the summer kindly warms,

Wi' life an' light,  
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,  
The lang, dark night!  
The muse, nae Poet ever fand her,  
'Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,  
Adown some trotting burn's meander,  
An' no think lang;  
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder  
A heart-felt sang!  
The warly race may drudge an' drive,  
Hog-shouter, jundie, stretch an' strive,  
Let me fair Nature's face describe,  
And I, wi' pleasure,  
Shall let the busy, grumblin' hive  
Bum owre their treasure.  
Fareweel, my "rhyme-composin' brither!"  
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:  
Now let us lay our heads thegither,  
In love fraternal;  
May envy wallop in a tether,  
Black fiend, infernal!  
While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;  
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;  
While terra firma, on her axes  
Diurnal turns,  
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,  
In Robert Burns.

**POSTSCRIPT**

My memory's no worth a preen:  
I had amaist forgotten clean,  
Ye bade me write you what they mean,  
By this New Light,  
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been,  
Maist like to fight.  
In days when mankind were but callans,  
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents,  
They took nae pains their speech to balance,  
Or rules to gie,  
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid Lallans,  
Like you or me.  
In thae auld times, they thought the moon,  
Just like a sark, or pair o' shoon,  
Wore by degrees, 'till her last roon,  
Gaed past their viewing,  
An' shortly after she was done,  
They gat a new one.  
This past for certain—undisputed;  
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,  
'Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,  
An' ca'd it wrang;  
An' muckle din there was about it,  
Baith loud an' lang.  
Some herds, weel learn'd upo' the beuk,  
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk;  
For 'twas the auld moon turned a neuk,  
An' out o' sight,

An' backlins-comin', to the leuk,  
She grew mair bright.  
This was deny'd, it was affirm'd;  
The herds an' hissels were alarm'd:  
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd and storm'd  
That beardless laddies  
Should think they better were inform'd  
Than their auld daddies.  
Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks;  
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks,  
An' monie a fallow gat his licks,  
Wi' hearty crunt;  
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,  
Were hang'd an' brunt.  
This game was play'd in monie lands,  
An' Auld Light caddies bure sic hands,  
That, faith, the youngsters took the sands  
Wi' nimble shanks,  
'Till lairds forbade, by strict commands,  
Sic bluidy pranks.  
But New Light herds gat sic a cowe,  
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an'-stowe,  
Till now amaist on every knowe,  
Ye'll find ane plac'd;  
An' some their New Light fair avow,  
Just quite barefac'd.  
Nae doubt the Auld Light flocks are bleatin';  
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin':

Myself, I've even seen them greetin'  
Wi' girnin' spite,  
To hear the moon sae sadly lie'd on  
By word an' write.  
But shortly they will cove the loons;  
Some Auld Light herds in neibor towns  
Are mind't in things they ca' balloons,  
To tak a flight,  
An' stay ae month among the moons  
And see them right.  
Guid observation they will gie them:  
An' when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them,  
The hindmost shaird, they'll fetch it wi' them,  
Just i' their pouch,  
An' when the New Light billies see them,  
I think they'll crouch!  
Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter  
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"  
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter  
In logic tulzie,  
I hope we bardies ken some better  
Than mind sic brulzie.

### **XXXIII. ADDRESS TO AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD**

[This hasty and not very decorous effusion, was

originally entitled “The Poet’s Welcome; or, Rab the Rhymer’s Address to his Bastard Child.” A copy, with the more softened, but less expressive title, was published by Stewart, in 1801, and is alluded to by Burns himself, in his biographical letter to Moore. “Bonnie Betty,” the mother of the “sonsie-smirking, dear-bought Bess,” of the Inventory, lived in Largieside: to support this daughter the poet made over the copyright of his works when he proposed to go to the West Indies. She lived to be a woman, and to marry one John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, where she died in 1817. It is said she resembled Burns quite as much as any of the rest of his children.]

Thou’s welcome, wean, mischanter fa’ me,  
If ought of thee, or of thy mammy,  
Shall ever daunton me, or awe me,  
My sweet wee lady,  
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca’ me  
Tit-ta or daddy.  
Wee image of my bonny Betty,  
I, fatherly, will kiss and daut thee,  
As dear and near my heart I set thee  
Wi’ as gude will  
As a’ the priests had seen me get thee  
That’s out o’ hell.  
What tho’ they ca’ me fornicator,  
An’ tease my name in kintry clatter:

The mair they talk I'm kent the better,  
E'en let them clash;  
An auld wife's tongue's a feckless matter  
To gie ane fash.  
Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,  
My funny toil is now a' tint,  
Sin' thou came to the warl asklent,  
Which fools may scoff at;  
In my last plack thy part's be in't  
The better ha'f o't.  
An' if thou be what I wad hae thee,  
An' tak the counsel I sall gie thee,  
A lovin' father I'll be to thee,  
If thou be spar'd;  
Thro' a' thy childish years I'll e'e thee,  
An' think't weel war'd.  
Gude grant that thou may ay inherit  
Thy mither's person, grace, an' merit,  
An' thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,  
Without his failins;  
'Twill please me mair to hear an' see it  
Than stocket mailens.

#### **XXXIV. NATURE'S LAW. A POEM HUMBLY INSCRIBED TO G. H. ESQ**

*"Great nature spoke, observant man obey'd."*



## Pope.

[This Poem was written by Burns at Mossgiel, and “humbly inscribed to Gavin Hamilton, Esq.” It is supposed to allude to his intercourse with Jean Armour, with the circumstances of which he seems to have made many of his comrades acquainted. These verses were well known to many of the admirers of the poet, but they remained in manuscript till given to the world by Sir Harris Nicolas, in Pickering’s Aldine Edition of the British Poets.]

Let other heroes boast their scars,  
The marks of sturt and strife;  
And other poets sing of wars,  
The plagues of human life;  
Shame fa’ the fun; wi’ sword and gun  
To slap mankind like lumber!  
I sing his name, and nobler fame,  
Wha multiplies our number.  
Great Nature spoke with air benign,  
“Go on, ye human race!  
This lower world I you resign;  
Be fruitful and increase.  
The liquid fire of strong desire  
I’ve pour’d it in each bosom;  
Here, in this hand, does mankind stand,  
And there, is beauty’s blossom.”

The hero of these artless strains,  
A lowly bard was he,  
Who sung his rhymes in Coila's plains  
With meikle mirth an' glee;  
Kind Nature's care had given his share,  
Large, of the flaming current;  
And all devout, he never sought  
To stem the sacred torrent.  
He felt the powerful, high behest,  
Thrill vital through and through;  
And sought a correspondent breast,  
To give obedience due:  
Propitious Powers screen'd the young flowers,  
From mildews of abortion;  
And lo! the bard, a great reward,  
Has got a double portion!  
Auld cantie Coil may count the day,  
As annual it returns,  
The third of Libra's equal sway,  
That gave another B[urns],  
With future rhymes, an' other times,  
To emulate his sire;  
To sing auld Coil in nobler style,  
With more poetic fire.  
Ye Powers of peace, and peaceful song,  
Look down with gracious eyes;  
And bless auld Coila, large and long,  
With multiplying joys:

Lang may she stand to prop the land,  
The flow'r of ancient nations;  
And B[urns's] spring, her fame to sing,  
Thro' endless generations!

### XXXV. TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH

[Poor M'Math was at the period of this epistle assistant to Wodrow, minister of Tarbolton: he was a good preacher, a moderate man in matters of discipline, and an intimate of the Coilsfield Montgomerys. His dependent condition depressed his spirits: he grew dissipated; and finally, it is said, enlisted as a common soldier, and died in a foreign land.]

*Sept. 17th, 1785.*

While at the stook the shearers cow'r  
To shun the bitter blaudin' show'r,  
Or in gulravage rinnin' scow'r  
To pass the time,  
To you I dedicate the hour  
In idle rhyme.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet  
On gown, an' ban', and douse black bonnet,  
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,  
Lest they should blame her,  
An' rouse their holy thunder on it

And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,  
That I, a simple countra bardie,  
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,  
Wha, if they ken me,  
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,  
Lowse hell upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,  
Their sighin' cantin' grace-proud faces,  
Their three-mile prayers, and hauf-mile graces,  
Their raxin' conscience,  
Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces,  
Waur nor their nonsense.

There's Gaun,<sup>45</sup> miska't waur than a beast,  
Wha has mair honour in his breast  
Than mony scores as guid's the priest  
Wha sae abus't him.

An' may a bard no crack his jest  
What way they've use't him.  
See him, the poor man's friend in need,  
The gentleman in word an' deed,  
An' shall his fame an' honour bleed  
By worthless skellums,  
An' not a muse erect her head  
To cowe the blellums?

---

45 Gavin Hamilton, Esq.

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts  
To gie the rascals their deserts,  
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,  
An' tell aloud  
Their jugglin' hocus-pocus arts  
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I'm no the thing I shou'd be,  
Nor am I even the thing I cou'd be,  
But twenty times, I rather wou'd be  
An atheist clean,  
Than under gospel colours hid be  
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,  
An honest man may like a lass,  
But mean revenge, an' malice fause  
He'll still disdain,  
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,  
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;  
They talk o' mercy, grace, an' truth,  
For what?—to gie their malice skouth  
On some puir wight,  
An' hunt him down, o'er right, an' ruth,  
To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion! maid divine!  
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,  
Who in her rough imperfect line,  
Thus daurs to name thee;

To stigmatize false friends of thine  
Can ne'er defame thee.  
Tho' blotch'd an' foul wi' mony a stain,  
An' far unworthy of thy train,  
With trembling voice I tune my strain  
To join with those,  
Who boldly daur thy cause maintain  
In spite o' foes:  
In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,  
In spite of undermining jobs,  
In spite o' dark banditti stabs  
At worth an' merit,  
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,  
But hellish spirit.  
O Ayr! my dear, my native ground,  
Within thy presbyterial bound  
A candid lib'ral band is found  
Of public teachers,  
As men, as Christians too, renown'd,  
An' manly preachers.  
Sir, in that circle you are nam'd;  
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;  
An' some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd,  
(Which gies you honour,)  
Even Sir, by them your heart's esteem'd,  
An' winning manner.  
Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,  
An' if impertinent I've been,

Impute it not, good Sir, in ane  
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,  
But to his utmost would befriend  
Ought that belang'd ye.

### **XXXVI. TO A MOUSE, ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785**

[This beautiful poem was imagined while the poet was holding the plough, on the farm of Mossgiel: the field is still pointed out: and a man called Blane is still living, who says he was gaudsman to the bard at the time, and chased the mouse with the plough-pettle, for which he was rebuked by his young master, who inquired what harm the poor mouse had done him. In the night that followed, Burns awoke his gaudsman, who was in the same bed with him, recited the poem as it now stands, and said, "What think you of our mouse now?"]

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!  
I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen icker in a thrave  
'S a sma' request:  
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,  
And never miss't!  
Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin;  
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',  
Baith snell and keen!  
Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,  
An' weary winter comin' fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
Thou thought to dwell,  
'Till, crash! the cruel coulter past  
Out thro' thy cell.  
That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,  
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,  
But house or hald,



To thole the winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld!  
But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,  
For promis'd joy.  
Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e,  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess an' fear.

## XXXVII. SCOTCH DRINK

*“Gie him strong drink, until he wink,  
That's sinking in despair;  
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,  
That's prest wi' grief an' care;  
There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,  
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,  
Till he forgets his loves or debts,  
An' minds his griefs no more.”*

**Solomon's Proverb, xxxi. 6, 7.**

[“I here enclose you,” said Burns, 20 March,

1786, to his friend Kennedy, “my Scotch Drink; I hope some time before we hear the gowk, to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock: when I intend we shall have a gill between us, in a mutchkin stoup.”]

Let other poets raise a fracas  
‘Bout vines, an’ wines, an’ dru’ken Bacchus,  
An’ crabbit names and stories wrack us,  
An’ grate our lug,  
I sing the juice Scotch bear can mak us,  
In glass or jug.  
O, thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch drink;  
Whether thro’ wimplin’ worms thou jink,  
Or, richly brown, ream o’er the brink,  
In glorious faem,  
Inspire me, till I lisp an’ wink,  
To sing thy name!  
Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,  
An’ aits set up their awnie horn,  
An’ pease an’ beans, at e’en or morn,  
Perfume the plain,  
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,  
Thou king o’ grain!  
On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,  
In souple scones, the wale o’ food!  
Or tumblin’ in the boilin’ flood  
Wi’ kail an’ beef;  
But when thou pours thy strong heart’s blood,

There thou shines chief.  
Food fills the wame an' keeps us livin';  
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin'  
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin';  
But, oil'd by thee,  
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin',  
Wi' rattlin' glee.  
Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;  
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;  
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,  
At's weary toil;  
Thou even brightens dark Despair  
Wi' gloomy smile.  
Aft, clad in massy, siller weed,  
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;  
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,  
The poor man's wine,  
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,  
Thou kitchens fine.  
Thou art the life o' public haunts;  
But thee, what were our fairs an' rants?  
Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,  
By thee inspir'd,  
When gaping they besiege the tents,  
Are doubly fir'd.  
That merry night we get the corn in,  
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in!  
Or reekin' on a new-year morning

In cog or dicker,  
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,  
An' gusty sucker!  
When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,  
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,  
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath  
I' th' lugget caup!  
Then Burnewin comes on like Death  
At ev'ry chap.  
Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;  
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,  
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,  
The strong forehammer,  
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel  
Wi' dinsome clamour.  
When skirlin' weanies see the light,  
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,  
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight;  
Wae worth the name!  
Nae howdie gets a social night,  
Or plack frae them.  
When neibors anger at a plea,  
An' just as wud as wud can be,  
How easy can the barley-bree  
Cement the quarrel!  
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,  
To taste the barrel.  
Alake! that e'er my muse has reason

To wyte her countrymen wi' treason!  
But monie daily weet their weason  
Wi' liquors nice,  
An' hardly, in a winter's season,  
E'er spier her price.  
Wae worth that brandy, burning trash!  
Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash!  
Twins monie a poor, doylt, druken hash,  
O' half his days;  
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash  
To her warst faes.  
Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well,  
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,  
Poor plackless devils like mysel',  
It sets you ill,  
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,  
Or foreign gill.  
May gravels round his blather wrench,  
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,  
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch  
O' sour disdain,  
Out owre a glass o' whiskey punch  
Wi' honest men;  
O whiskey! soul o' plays an' pranks!  
Accept a Bardie's gratefu' thanks!  
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks  
Are my poor verses!  
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks

At ither's a-s!  
Thee, Ferintosh! O sadly lost!  
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!  
Now colic grips, an' barkin' hoast,  
May kill us a';  
For loyal Forbes' charter'd boast,  
Is ta'en awa.  
Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,  
Wha mak the whiskey stells their prize!  
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice!  
There, seize the blinkers!  
An' bake them up in brunstane pies  
For poor d—n'd drinkers.  
Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still  
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whiskey gill,  
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,  
Tak' a' the rest,  
An' deal't about as thy blind skill  
Directs thee best.

## **XXXVIII. THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**

*'Dearest of distillation! last and best!—  
—How art thou lost!—'*

## Parody on Milton

[“This Poem was written,” says Burns, “before the act anent the Scottish distilleries, of session 1786, for which Scotland and the author return their most grateful thanks.” Before the passing of this lenient act, so sharp was the law in the North, that some distillers relinquished their trade; the price of barley was affected, and Scotland, already exasperated at the refusal of a militia, for which she was a petitioner, began to handle her claymore, and was perhaps only hindered from drawing it by the act mentioned by the poet. In an early copy of the poem, he thus alludes to Colonel Hugh Montgomery, afterwards Earl of Eglinton:—

*“Thee, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,  
If bardies e’er are represented,  
I ken if that yere sword were wanted  
Ye’d lend yere hand;  
But when there’s aught to say anent it  
Yere at a stand.”*

The poet was not sure that Montgomery would think the compliment to his ready hand an excuse in full for the allusion to his unready tongue, and omitted the stanza.]

Ye Irish lords, ye knights an’ squires,  
Wha represent our brughs an’ shires,

An' doucely manage our affairs  
In Parliament,  
To you a simple Bardie's prayers  
Are humbly sent.  
Alas! my roupet Muse is hearse!  
Your honours' hearts wi' grief 'twad pierce,  
To see her sittin' on her a—e  
Low i' the dust,  
An' scriechin' out prosaic verse,  
An' like to brust!  
Tell them wha hae the chief direction,  
Scotland an' me's in great affliction,  
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction  
On aqua-vitæ;  
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,  
An' move their pity.  
Stand forth, an' tell yon Premier youth,  
The honest, open, naked truth:  
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,  
His servants humble:  
The muckie devil blaw ye south,  
If ye dissemble!  
Does ony great man glunch an' gloom?  
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb!  
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom  
Wi' them wha grant 'em:  
If honestly they canna come,  
Far better want 'em.



In gath'rin votes you were na slack;  
Now stand as tightly by your tack;  
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back,  
An' hum an' haw;  
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack  
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greetin' owre her thrizzle,  
Her mutchkin stoup as toom's a whistle:  
An' damn'd excisemen in a bussle,  
Seizin' a stell,  
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel  
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,  
A blackguard smuggler, right behint her,  
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner,  
Colleaguin join,  
Picking her pouch as bare as winter  
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,  
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,  
To see his poor auld mither's pot  
Thus dung in staves,  
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat  
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,  
Trode i' the mire out o' sight!  
But could I like Montgomeries fight,  
Or gab like Boswell,

There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,  
An' tie some hose well.  
God bless your honours, can ye see't,  
The kind, auld, canty carlin greet,  
An' no get warmly on your feet,  
An' gar them hear it!  
An' tell them with a patriot heat,  
Ye winna bear it?  
Some o' you nicely ken the laws,  
To round the period an' pause,  
An' wi' rhetorie clause on clause  
To mak harangues:  
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's  
Auld Scotland's wrangs.  
Dempster, a true blue Scot I'se warran';  
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;<sup>46</sup>  
An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron,  
The Laird o' Graham;<sup>47</sup>  
An' ane, a chap that's damn'd auldfarren,  
Dundas his name.  
Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie;  
True Campbells, Frederick an' Hay;  
An' Livingstone, the bauld Sir Willie:

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<sup>46</sup> Sir Adam Ferguson.

<sup>47</sup> The Duke of Montrose.

An' monie ithers,  
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully  
Might own for brithers.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,  
To get auld Scotland back her kettle:  
Or faith! I'll wad my new pleugh-pettle,  
Ye'll see't or lang,  
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin' whittle,  
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood,  
Her lost militia fir'd her bluid;  
(Deil na they never mair do guid,  
Play'd her that pliskie!)

An' now she's like to rin red-wud  
About her whiskey.

An' L—d, if once they pit her till't,  
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,  
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,  
She'll tak the streets,  
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,  
I' th' first she meets!

For God sake, sirs, then speak her fair,  
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,  
An' to the muckle house repair,  
Wi' instant speed,  
An' strive, wi' a' your wit and lear,  
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, Charlie Fox,

May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;  
But gie him't het, my hearty cocks!  
E'en cove the cadie!  
An' send him to his dicing box,  
An' sportin' lady.  
Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's  
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,  
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's<sup>48</sup>  
Nine times a-week,  
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,  
Wad kindly seek.  
Could he some commutation broach,  
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,  
He need na fear their foul reproach  
Nor erudition,  
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch,  
The Coalition.  
Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;  
She's just a devil wi' a rung;  
An' if she promise auld or young  
To tak their part,  
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,  
She'll no desert.  
An' now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,

---

<sup>48</sup> A worthy old hostess of the author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.

May still your mither's heart support ye,  
Then, though a minister grow dorty,  
An' kick your place,  
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,  
Before his face.

God bless your honours a' your days,  
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,  
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes,  
That haunt St. Jamie's:  
Your humble Poet signs an' prays  
While Rab his name is.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Let half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies  
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise;  
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,  
But blythe and frisky,  
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys,  
Tak aff their whiskey.  
What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,  
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms!  
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,  
The scented groves,  
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms  
In hungry droves.  
Their gun's a burden on their shouter;  
They downa bide the stink o' powther;  
Their bauldest thought's a' hank'ring swither  
To stan' or rin,

Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throther  
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,  
Clap in his check a Highland gill,  
Say, such is royal George's will,  
An' there's the foe,  
He has nae thought but how to kill  
Twa at a blow.

Nae could faint-hearted doubtings tease him;  
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;  
Wi' bluidy han' a welcome gies him;  
An' when he fa's,  
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him  
In faint huzzas!

Sages their solemn een may steek,  
An' raise a philosophic reek,  
An' physically causes seek,  
In clime an' season;  
But tell me whiskey's name in Greek,  
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!  
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,  
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather  
Ye tine your dam;  
Freedom and whiskey gang thegither!—  
Tak aff your dram!

## XXXIX. ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS

*“My son, these maxims make a rule,  
And lump them ay thegither;  
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,  
The Rigid Wise anither:  
The cleanest corn that e’er was dight  
May hae some pyles o’ caffin;  
So ne’er a fellow-creature slight  
For random fits o’ daffin.”*

**Solomon.—Eccles. ch. vii. ver. 16.**

[“Burns,” says Hogg, in a note on this Poem, “has written more from his own heart and his own feelings than any other poet. External nature had few charms for him; the sublime shades and hues of heaven and earth never excited his enthusiasm: but with the secret fountains of passion in the human soul he was well acquainted.” Burns, indeed, was not what is called a descriptive poet: yet with what exquisite snatches of description are some of his poems adorned, and in what fragrant and romantic scenes he enshrines the heroes and heroines of many of his finest songs! Who the high, exalted, virtuous dames were, to whom the Poem refers, we are not told. How much men stand indebted to want of opportunity to sin, and how much of their good name they owe to the ignorance of the world,

were inquiries in which the poet found pleasure.]

I.

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel',  
Sae pious and sae holy,  
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell  
Your neibor's fauts and folly!  
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,  
Supply'd wi' store o' water,  
The heaped happer's ebbing still,  
And still the clap plays clatter.

II.

Hear me, ye venerable core,  
As counsel for poor mortals,  
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door  
For glaikit Folly's portals;  
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,  
Would here propone defences,  
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,  
Their failings and mischances.

III.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,  
And shudder at the niffer,  
But cast a moment's fair regard,  
What maks the mighty differ?  
Discount what scant occasion gave,  
That purity ye pride in,  
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)



Your better art o' hiding.

IV.

Think, when your castigated pulse  
Gies now and then a wallop,  
What ragings must his veins convulse,  
That still eternal gallop:  
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,  
Right on ye scud your sea-way;  
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,  
It makes an unco lee-way.

V.

See social life and glee sit down,  
All joyous and unthinking,  
'Till, quite transmugrify'd, they're grown  
Debauchery and drinking;  
O would they stay to calculate  
Th' eternal consequences;  
Or your more dreaded hell to state,  
D—mnation of expenses!

VI.

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,  
Ty'd up in godly laces,  
Before ye gie poor frailty names,  
Suppose a change o' cases;  
A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,  
A treacherous inclination—  
But, let me whisper, i' your lug,  
Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

VII.

Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman;  
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang,  
To step aside is human:  
One point must still be greatly dark,  
The moving why they do it:  
And just as lamely can ye mark,  
How far perhaps they rue it.

VIII.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone  
Decidedly can try us,  
He knows each chord—its various tone,  
Each spring—its various bias:  
Then at the balance let's be mute,  
We never can adjust it;  
What's done we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted.

## **XL. TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY<sup>49</sup>**

*"An honest man's the noblest work of God."*

---

<sup>49</sup> When this worthy old sportsman went out last muirfowl season, he supposed it was to be, in Ossian's phrase, "the last of his fields."

## Pope.

[Tam Samson was a west country seedsman and sportsman, who loved a good song, a social glass, and relished a shot so well that he expressed a wish to die and be buried in the moors. On this hint Burns wrote the Elegy: when Tam heard o' this he waited on the poet, caused him to recite it, and expressed displeasure at being numbered with the dead: the author, whose wit was as ready as his rhymes, added the Per Contra in a moment, much to the delight of his friend. At his death the four lines of Epitaph were cut on his gravestone. "This poem has always," says Hogg, "been a great country favourite: it abounds with happy expressions.

*'In vain the burns cam' down like waters,  
An acre braid.'*

What a picture of a flooded burn! any other poet would have given us a long description: Burns dashes it down at once in a style so graphic no one can mistake it.

*'Perhaps upon his mouldering breast  
Some spitefu' moorfowl bigs her nest.'*

Match that sentence who can."]

Has auld Kilmarnock seen the deil?

Or great M'Kinlay<sup>50</sup> thrawn his heel?

---

<sup>50</sup> A preacher, a great favourite with the million. Vide the

Or Robinson<sup>51</sup> again grown weel,  
To preach an' read?  
"Na, waur than a'!" cries ilka chiel,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
Kilmarnock lang may grunt an' grane,  
An' sigh, an' sob, an' greet her lane,  
An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, an wean,  
In mourning weed;  
To death, she's dearly paid the kane,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
The brethren o' the mystic level  
May hing their head in woefu' bevel,  
While by their nose the tears will revel,  
Like ony bead;  
Death's gien the lodge an unco devel,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
When Winter muffles up his cloak,  
And binds the mire like a rock;  
When to the lochs the curlers flock,  
Wi' gleesome speed,  
Wha will they station at the cock?  
Tam Samson's dead!

---

Ordination, stanza II

<sup>51</sup> Another preacher, an equal favourite with the few, who was at that time ailing. For him see also the Ordination, stanza IX.

He was the king o' a' the core,  
To guard or draw, or wick a bore,  
Or up the rink like Jehu roar  
In time o' need;  
But now he lags on death's hog-score,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
Now safe the stately sawmont sail,  
And trouts be-dropp'd wi' crimson hail,  
And eels weel ken'd for souple tail,  
And geds for greed,  
Since dark in death's fish-creel we wail  
Tam Samson dead.  
Rejoice, ye birring patricks a';  
Ye cootie moor-cocks, crouselly craw;  
Ye maukins, cock your fud fu' braw,  
Withouten dread;  
Your mortal fae is now awa'—  
Tam Samson's dead!  
That woefu' morn be ever mourn'd  
Saw him in shootin' graith adorn'd,  
While pointers round impatient burn'd,  
Frae couples freed;  
But, Och! he gaed and ne'er return'd!  
Tam Samson's dead!  
In vain auld age his body batters;  
In vain the gout his ancles fetters;  
In vain the burns cam' down like waters,  
An acre braid!

Now ev'ry auld wife, greetin', clatters,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
Owre many a weary hag he limpit,  
An' ay the tither shot he thumpit,  
Till coward death behind him jumpit,  
Wi' deadly feide;  
Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet,  
Tam Samson's dead!  
When at his heart he felt the dagger,  
He reel'd his wonted bottle swagger,  
But yet he drew the mortal trigger  
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;  
"L—d, five!" he cry'd, an' owre did stagger;  
Tam Samson's dead!  
Ilk hoary hunter mourn'd a brither;  
Ilk sportsman youth bemoan'd a father;  
Yon auld grey stane, amang the heather,  
Marks out his head,  
Whare Burns has wrote in rhyiming blether  
Tam Samson's dead!  
There low he lies, in lasting rest;  
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast  
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest,  
To hatch an' breed;  
Alas! nae mair he'll them molest!  
Tam Samson's dead!  
When August winds the heather wave,  
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,

Three volleys let his mem'ry crave  
O' pouter an' lead,  
'Till echo answer frae her cave  
Tam Samson's dead!  
Heav'n rest his soul, whare'er he be!  
Is th' wish o' mony mae than me;  
He had twa fauts, or may be three,  
Yet what remead?  
Ae social, honest man want we:  
Tam Samson's dead!

#### EPITAPH

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,  
Ye canting zealots spare him!  
If honest worth in heaven rise,  
Ye'll mend or ye win near him.

#### PER CONTRA

Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly  
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' Killie,  
Tell ev'ry social honest billie  
To cease his grievin',  
For yet, unskait'h'd by death's gleg gullie,  
Tam Samson's livin'.

## **XLI. LAMENT, OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR**

*“Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself!  
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe.”*

**Home.**

[The hero and heroine of this little mournful poem, were Robert Burns and Jean Armour. “This was a most melancholy affair,” says the poet in his letter to Moore, “which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality.” Hogg and Motherwell, with an ignorance which is easier to laugh at than account for, say this Poem was “written on the occasion of Alexander Cunningham’s darling sweetheart alighting him and marrying another:—she acted a wise part.” With what care they had read the great poet whom they jointly edited in is needless to say: and how they could read the last two lines of the third verse and commend the lady’s wisdom for slighting her lover, seems a problem which defies definition. This mistake was pointed out by a friend, and corrected in a second issue of the volume.]

I.

O thou pale orb, that silent shines,  
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!  
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines,  
And wanders here to wail and weep!



With woe I nightly vigils keep,  
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam,  
And mourn, in lamentation deep,  
How life and love are all a dream.

II.

A joyless view thy rays adorn  
The faintly marked distant hill:  
I joyless view thy trembling horn,  
Reflected in the gurgling rill:  
My fondly-fluttering heart, be still:  
Thou busy pow'r, Remembrance, cease!  
Ah! must the agonizing thrill  
For ever bar returning peace!

III.

No idly-feign'd poetic pains,  
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;  
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;  
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:  
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;  
The oft-attested Pow'rs above;  
The promis'd father's tender name;  
These were the pledges of my love!

IV.

Encircled in her clasping arms,  
How have the raptur'd moments flown!  
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,  
For her dear sake, and hers alone!  
And must I think it!—is she gone,

My secret heart's exulting boast?  
And does she heedless hear my groan?  
And is she ever, ever lost?

V.

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,  
So lost to honour, lost to truth,  
As from the fondest lover part,  
The plighted husband of her youth!  
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!  
Her way may lie thro' rough distress!  
Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,  
Her sorrows share, and make them less?

VI.

Ye winged hours that o'er us past,  
Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,  
Your dear remembrance in my breast,  
My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd,  
That breast, how dreary now, and void,  
For her too scanty once of room!  
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,  
And not a wish to gild the gloom!

VII.

The morn that warns th' approaching day,  
Awakes me up to toil and woe:  
I see the hours in long array,  
That I must suffer, lingering slow.  
Full many a pang, and many a throe,  
Keen recollection's direful train,

Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,  
Shall kiss the distant, western main.

VIII.

And when my nightly couch I try,  
Sore-harass'd out with care and grief,  
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,  
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:  
Or if I slumber, fancy, chief,  
Reigns haggard-wild, in sore affright:  
Ev'n day, all-bitter, brings relief,  
From such a horror-breathing night.

IX.

O! thou bright queen, who o'er th' expanse  
Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway!  
Oft has thy silent-marking glance  
Observ'd us, fondly-wand'ring, stray!  
The time, unheeded, sped away,  
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,  
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,  
To mark the mutual kindling eye.

X.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!  
Scenes never, never to return!  
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,  
Again I feel, again I burn!  
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,  
Life's weary vale I'll wander thro';  
And hopeless, comfortless, I'll mourn

A faithless woman's broken vow.

## **XLII. DESPONDENCY. AN ODE**

["I think," said Burns, "it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, and loves an embodied form in verse, which to me is ever immediate ease." He elsewhere says, "My passions raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme." That eminent painter, Fuseli, on seeing his wife in a passion, said composedly, "Swear my love, swear heartily: you know not how much it will ease you!" This poem was printed in the Kilmarnock edition, and gives a true picture of those bitter moments experienced by the bard, when love and fortune alike deceived him.]

I.

Opress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,  
A burden more than I can bear,  
I set me down and sigh:  
O life! thou art a galling load,  
Along a rough, a weary road,  
To wretches such as I!  
Dim-backward as I cast my view,

What sick'ning scenes appear!  
What sorrows yet may pierce me thro'  
Too justly I may fear!  
Still caring, despairing,  
Must be my bitter doom;  
My woes here shall close ne'er  
But with the closing tomb!

II.

Happy, ye sons of busy life,  
Who, equal to the bustling strife,  
No other view regard!  
Ev'n when the wished end's deny'd,  
Yet while the busy means are ply'd,  
They bring their own reward:  
Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,  
Unfitted with an aim,  
Meet ev'ry sad returning night  
And joyless morn the same;  
You, bustling, and justling,  
Forget each grief and pain;  
I, listless, yet restless,  
Find every prospect vain.

III.

How blest the solitary's lot,  
Who, all-forgetting, all forgot,  
Within his humble cell,  
The cavern wild with tangling roots,  
Sits o'er his newly-gather'd fruits,

Beside his crystal well!  
Or, haply, to his ev'ning thought,  
By unfrequented stream,  
The ways of men are distant brought,  
A faint collected dream;  
While praising, and raising  
His thoughts to heav'n on high,  
As wand'ring, meand'ring,  
He views the solemn sky.

IV.

Than I, no lonely hermit plac'd  
Where never human footstep trac'd,  
Less fit to play the part;  
The lucky moment to improve,  
And just to stop, and just to move,  
With self-respecting art:  
But, ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,  
Which I too keenly taste,  
The solitary can despise,  
Can want, and yet be blest!  
He needs not, he heeds not,  
Or human love or hate,  
Whilst I here, must cry here  
At perfidy ingrate!

V.

Oh! enviable, early days,  
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,  
To care, to guilt unknown!

How ill exchang'd for riper times,  
To feel the follies, or the crimes,  
Of others, or my own!  
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,  
Like linnets in the bush,  
Ye little know the ills ye court,  
When manhood is your wish!  
The losses, the crosses,  
That active man engage!  
The fears all, the tears all,  
Of dim declining age!

### **XLIII. THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT. INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ**

*“Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure:  
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
The short and simple annals of the poor.”*

**Gray**

[The house of William Burns was the scene of this fine, devout, and tranquil drama, and William himself was the saint, the father, and the husband, who gives life and sentiment to the whole. “Robert had frequently remarked to me,” says Gilbert Burns, “that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in

the phrase, 'Let us worship God!' used by a decent sober head of a family, introducing family worship." To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the "Cotter's Saturday Night." He owed some little, however, of the inspiration to Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle," a poem of great merit. The calm tone and holy composure of the Cotter's Saturday Night have been mistaken by Hogg for want of nerve and life. "It is a dull, heavy, lifeless poem," he says, "and the only beauty it possesses, in my estimation, is, that it is a sort of family picture of the poet's family. The worst thing of all, it is not original, but is a decided imitation of Fergusson's beautiful pastoral, 'The Farmer's Ingle:' I have a perfect contempt for all plagiarisms and imitations." Motherwell tries to qualify the censure of his brother editor, by quoting Lockhart's opinion—at once lofty and just, of this fine picture of domestic happiness and devotion.]

I.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend!  
No mercenary bard his homage pays;  
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:  
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:  
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,  
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;  
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;  
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;



Ah! tho' his work unknown, far happier there, I  
ween!

II.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sigh;  
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;  
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh:  
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:  
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,  
This night his weekly moil is at an end,  
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does  
homeward bend.

III.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;  
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher thro'  
To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.  
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily.  
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie Wifie's smile,  
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,  
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,  
An' makes him quite forget his labour and his  
toil.

IV.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,  
At service out amang the farmers roun':  
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin

A cannie errand to a neebor town:  
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,  
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,  
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,  
Or deposite her sair won penny-fee,  
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.  
V.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,  
An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers:  
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd, fleet;  
Each tells the unco's that he sees or hears;  
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;  
Anticipation forward points the view.  
The Mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,  
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;  
The Father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

VI.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,  
The younkers a' are warned to obey;  
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,  
An' ne'er, tho' out of sight, to jauk or play:  
“And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!  
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!  
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
Implore His counsel and assisting might:  
They never sought in vain, that sought the Lord

aright!”

VII.

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;  
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,  
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,  
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.  
The wily Mother sees the conscious flame  
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,  
With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his

name,

While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;  
Weel pleas'd the Mother hears it's nae wild,  
worthless rake.

VIII.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;  
A strappan youth; he taks the Mother's eye;  
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;  
The Father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.  
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,  
But blate, an laithfu', scarce can weel behave;  
The Mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy  
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;  
Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like

the lave.

IX.

O happy love! Where love like this is found!  
O heart-felt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!  
I've paced much this weary, mortal round,  
And sage experience bids me this declare—  
“If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,

One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,  
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,  
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the  
ev'ning gale."

X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—  
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!  
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,  
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?  
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!  
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?  
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,  
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?  
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction  
wild?

XI.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,  
The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food:  
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,  
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:  
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,  
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,  
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;  
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,  
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the  
bell.

XII.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
The Sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,  
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride;  
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,  
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;  
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
He wales a portion with judicious care;  
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with solemn

air.

### XIII.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:  
Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,  
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name;  
Or noble Elgin beets the heaven-ward flame,  
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:  
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;  
The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;  
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

### XIV.

The priest-like Father reads the sacred page,  
How Abram was the friend of God on high;  
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;  
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;

Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;  
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

XV.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,  
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;  
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,  
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:  
How His first followers and servants sped,  
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:  
How he who lone in Patmos banished,  
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;  
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by

Heaven's command.

XVI.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's eternal King,  
The Saint, the Father, and the Husband prays:  
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'<sup>52</sup>  
That thus they all shall meet in future days:  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear:  
While circling Time moves round in an eternal

sphere.

XVII.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
In all the pomp of method and of art,  
When men display to congregations wide,  
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!  
The Pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,  
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;  
But haply, in some cottager far apart,  
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;  
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.  
XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;  
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:  
Their Parent-pair their secret homage pay,  
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,  
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,  
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
For them and for their little ones provide;  
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine  
preside.

XIX.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur  
springs,  
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
"An honest man's the noblest work of God;"<sup>53</sup>

And certes, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;  
What is a lordship's pomp? a cumbrous load,  
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd!  
XX.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!  
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!  
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil  
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet  
content!

And, O! may heaven their simple lives prevent  
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!  
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,  
A virtuous populace may rise the while,  
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd  
Isle.

XXI.  
O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide  
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted  
heart:

Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,  
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,  
(The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,  
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)  
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;

---



But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,  
In bright succession raise, her ornament and  
guard!

## XLIV. THE FIRST PSALM



[This version was first printed in the second edition of the poet's work. It cannot be regarded as one of his happiest compositions: it is inferior, not indeed in ease, but in simplicity and antique rigour of language, to the common version used in the Kirk of Scotland. Burns had admitted "Death and Dr. Hornbook" into Creech's edition, and probably desired to balance it with something at which the devout could not cavil.]

The man, in life wherever plac'd,

Hath happiness in store,  
Who walks not in the wicked's way,  
Nor learns their guilty lore!  
Nor from the seat of scornful pride  
Casts forth his eyes abroad,  
But with humility and awe  
Still walks before his God.  
That man shall flourish like the trees  
Which by the streamlets grow;  
The fruitful top is spread on high,  
And firm the root below.  
But he whose blossom buds in guilt  
Shall to the ground be cast,  
And, like the rootless stubble, tost  
Before the sweeping blast.  
For why? that God the good adore  
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,  
But hath decreed that wicked men  
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

## **XLV. THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM**

[The ninetieth Psalm is said to have been a favourite in the household of William Burns: the version used by the Kirk, though unequal, contains beautiful verses, and possesses the same strain of

sentiment and moral reasoning as the poem of “Man was made to Mourn.” These verses first appeared in the Edinburgh edition; and they might have been spared; for in the hands of a poet ignorant of the original language of the Psalmist, how could they be so correct in sense and expression as in a sacred strain is not only desirable but necessary?]

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend  
Of all the human race!  
Whose strong right hand has ever been  
Their stay and dwelling place!  
Before the mountains heav'd their heads  
Beneath Thy forming hand,  
Before this ponderous globe itself  
Arose at Thy command;  
That Pow'r which rais'd and still upholds  
This universal frame,  
From countless, unbeginning time  
Was ever still the same.  
Those mighty periods of years  
Which seem to us so vast,  
Appear no more before Thy sight  
Than yesterday that's past.  
Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,  
Is to existence brought;  
Again thou say'st, “Ye sons of men,  
Return ye into nought!”

Thou layest them, with all their cares,  
In everlasting sleep;  
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off  
With overwhelming sweep.  
They flourish like the morning flow'r,  
In beauty's pride array'd;  
But long ere night, cut down, it lies  
All wither'd and decay'd.

## **XLVI. TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY, ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL, 1786**

[This was not the original title of this sweet poem: I have a copy in the handwriting of Burns entitled "The Gowan." This more natural name he changed as he did his own, without reasonable cause; and he changed it about the same time, for he ceased to call himself Burness and his poem "The Gowan," in the first edition of his works. The field at Mossgiel where he turned down the Daisy is said to be the same field where some five months before he turned up the Mouse; but this seems likely only to those who are little acquainted with tillage—who think that in time and place reside the chief charms of verse; and who feel not the beauty of "The Daisy," till they seek and find the spot on which it grew. Sublime morality and the

deepest emotions of the soul pass for little with those  
who remember only what the genius loves to forget.]

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,  
Thou's met me in an evil hour;  
For I maun crush amang the stoure  
Thy slender stem:  
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,  
Thou bonnie gem.  
Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,  
The bonnie lark, companion meet!  
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,  
Wi' spreckl'd breast,  
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet  
The purpling east.  
Cauld blew the bitter-biting north  
Upon thy early, humble birth;  
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
Amid the storm,  
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth  
Thy tender form.  
The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,  
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield  
But thou, beneath the random bield  
O' clod or stane,  
Adorns the histie stibble-field,  
Unseen, alane.  
There, in thy scanty mantle clad,

Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,  
Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
In humble guise;  
But now the share uptears thy bed,  
And low thou lies!  
Such is the fate of artless maid,  
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!  
By love's simplicity betray'd,  
And guileless trust,  
'Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid  
Low i' the dust.  
Such is the fate of simple bard,  
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!  
Unskilful he to note the card  
Of prudent lore,  
'Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,  
And whelm him o'er!  
Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,  
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,  
By human pride or cunning driv'n  
To mis'ry's brink,  
'Till wrenched of every stay but Heav'n,  
He, ruin'd, sink!  
Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,  
That fate is thine—no distant date;  
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,  
Full on thy bloom,  
'Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,

Shall be thy doom!

## **XLVII. EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND. MAY, 1786**

[Andrew Aikin, to whom this poem of good counsel is addressed, was one of the sons of Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, to whom the Cotter's Saturday Night is inscribed. He became a merchant in Liverpool, with what success we are not informed, and died at St. Petersburg. The poet has been charged with a desire to teach hypocrisy rather than truth to his "Andrew dear;" but surely to conceal one's own thoughts and discover those of others, can scarcely be called hypocritical: it is, in fact, a version of the celebrated precept of prudence, "Thoughts close and looks loose." Whether he profited by all the counsel showered upon him by the muse we know not: he was much respected—his name embalmed, like that of his father, in the poetry of his friend, is not likely soon to perish.]

I.

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,  
A something to have sent you,  
Though it should serve nae ither end  
Than just a kind memento;  
But how the subject-theme may gang,



Let time and chance determine;  
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,  
Perhaps, turn out a sermon.

II.

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad,  
And, Andrew dear, believe me,  
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,  
And muckle they may grieve ye:  
For care and trouble set your thought,  
Ev'n when your end's attain'd;  
And a' your views may come to nought,  
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

III.

I'll no say men are villains a';  
The real, harden'd wicked,  
Wha hae nae check but human law,  
Are to a few restricked;  
But, och! mankind are unco weak,  
An' little to be trusted;  
If self the wavering balance shake,  
It's rarely right adjusted!

IV.

Yet they wha fa' in Fortune's strife,  
Their fate we should na censure,  
For still th' important end of life  
They equally may answer;  
A man may hae an honest heart,  
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;

A man may tak a neebor's part,  
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

V.

Ay free, aff han' your story tell,  
When wi' a bosom crony;  
But still keep something to yoursel'  
Ye scarcely tell to ony.

Conceal yoursel' as weel's ye can  
Frae critical dissection;  
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,  
Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

VI.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,  
Luxuriantly indulge it;  
But never tempt th' illicit rove,  
Tho' naething should divulge it:  
I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
The hazard of concealing;  
But, och! it hardens a' within,  
And petrifies the feeling!

VII.

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,  
Assiduous wait upon her;  
And gather gear by ev'ry wile  
That's justified by honour;  
Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Nor for a train-attendant;  
But for the glorious privilege

Of being independent.

VIII.

The fear o' Hell's a hangman's whip,  
To haud the wretch in order;  
But where ye feel your honour grip,  
Let that ay be your border:  
Its slightest touches, instant pause—  
Debar a' side pretences;  
And resolutely keep its laws,  
Uncaring consequences.

IX.

The great Creator to revere  
Must sure become the creature;  
But still the preaching cant forbear,  
And ev'n the rigid feature:  
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,  
Be complaisance extended;  
An Atheist laugh's a poor exchange  
For Deity offended!

X.

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,  
Religion may be blinded;  
Or if she gie a random sting,  
It may be little minded;  
But when on life we're tempest-driv'n,  
A conscience but a canker—  
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n  
Is sure a noble anchor!

XI.

Adieu, dear, amiable youth!  
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!  
May prudence, fortitude, and truth  
Erect your brow undaunting!  
In ploughman phrase, 'God send you speed,'  
Still daily to grow wiser:  
And may you better reck the rede  
Than ever did th' adviser!

## **XLVIII. TO A LOUSE, ON SEEING ONE IN A LADY'S BONNET, AT CHURCH**

[A Mauchline incident of a Mauchline lady is related in this poem, which to many of the softer friends of the bard was anything but welcome: it appeared in the Kilmarnock copy of his Poems, and remonstrance and persuasion were alike tried in vain to keep it out of the Edinburgh edition. Instead of regarding it as a seasonable rebuke to pride and vanity, some of his learned commentators called it coarse and vulgar—those classic persons might have remembered that Julian, no vulgar person, but an emperor and a scholar, wore a populous beard, and was proud of it.]

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie!  
Your impudence protects you sairly:

I canna say by ye strunt rarely,  
Owre gauze and lace;  
Tho' faith, I fear, ye dine but sparely  
On sic a place.  
Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,  
Detested, shunn'd, by saunt an' sinner,  
How dare you set your fit upon her,  
Sae fine a lady!  
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner  
On some poor body.  
Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle;  
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle  
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,  
In shoals and nations;  
Whare horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle  
Your thick plantations.  
Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight,  
Below the fatt'rells, snug an' tight;  
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right  
'Till ye've got on it,  
The vera topmost, tow'ring height  
O' Miss's bonnet.  
My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,  
As plump an' gray as onie grozet;  
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,  
Or fell, red smeddum,  
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't,  
Wad dross your droddum!

I wad na been surpris'd to spy  
You on an auld wife's flainen toy;  
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,  
On's wyliecoat;  
But Miss's fine Lunardi! fie!  
How daur ye do't?  
O, Jenny, dinna toss your head,  
An' set your beauties a' abroad!  
Ye little ken what cursed speed  
The blastie's makin'!  
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,  
Are notice takin'!  
O wad some Power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as others see us!  
It wad frae monie a blunder free us  
An' foolish notion;  
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,  
And ev'n devotion!

## **XLIX. EPISTLE TO J. RANKINE, ENCLOSING SOME POEMS**

[The person to whom these verses are addressed lived at Adamhill in Ayrshire, and merited the praise of rough and ready-witted, which the poem bestows. The humorous dream alluded to, was related by way of rebuke to a west country earl, who was in the habit of

calling all people of low degree “Brutes!—damned brutes.” “I dreamed that I was dead,” said the rustic satirist to his superior, “and condemned for the company I kept. When I came to hell-door, where mony of your lordship’s friends gang, I chappit, and ‘Wha are ye, and where d’ye come frae?’ Satan exclaimed. I just said, that my name was Rankine, and I came frae yere lordship’s land. ‘Awa wi’ you,’ cried Satan, ye canna come here: hell’s fou o’ his lordship’s damned brutes already.’”]

O rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,  
The wale o’ cocks for fun an’ drinkin’!  
There’s monie godly folks are thinkin’,  
Your dreams<sup>54</sup> an’ tricks  
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin’  
Straight to auld Nick’s.  
Ye hae sae monie cracks an’ cants,  
And in your wicked, dru’ken rants,  
Ye mak a devil o’ the saunts,  
An’ fill them fou;  
And then their failings, flaws, an’ wants,  
Are a’ seen through.  
Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!

---

<sup>54</sup> A certain humorous dream of his was then making a noise in the country-side.

That holy robe, O dinna tear it!  
Spare't for their sakes wha aften wear it,  
The lads in black!  
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,  
Rives't aff their back.  
Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing,  
It's just the blue-gown badge and claithing  
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naething  
To ken them by,  
Frae ony unregenerate heathen,  
Like you or I.  
I've sent you here some rhyiming ware,  
A' that I bargain'd for, an' mair;  
Sae, when you hae an hour to spare,  
I will expect  
Yon sang,<sup>55</sup> ye'll sen't wi cannie care,  
And no neglect.  
Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!  
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing!  
I've play'd mysel' a bonnie spring,  
An' danc'd my fill!  
I'd better gaen an' sair't the king,  
At Bunker's Hill.  
'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,  
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,

---

55 A song he had promised the author.



An' brought a pairrick to the grun',  
A bonnie hen,  
And, as the twilight was begun,  
Thought nane wad ken.  
The poor wee thing was little hurt;  
I strakit it a wee for sport,  
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for't;  
But, deil-ma-care!  
Somebody tells the poacher-court  
The hale affair.  
Some auld us'd hands had taen a note,  
That sic a hen had got a shot;  
I was suspected for the plot;  
I scorn'd to lie;  
So gat the whissle o' my groat,  
An' pay't the fee.  
But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,  
An' by my pouter an' my hail,  
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,  
I vow an' swear!  
The game shall pay o'er moor an' dale,  
For this niest year.  
As soon's the clockin-time is by,  
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,  
L—d, I'se hae sportin' by an' by,  
For my gowd guinea;  
Tho' I should herd the buckskin kye  
For't, in Virginia.

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!  
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,  
But twa-three draps about the wame  
Scarce thro' the feathers;  
An' baith a yellow George to claim,  
An' thole their blethers!  
It pits me ay as mad's a hare;  
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;  
But pennyworths again is fair,  
When time's expedient:  
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,

Your most obedient.

## L. ON A SCOTCH BARD, GONE TO THE WEST INDIES

[Burns in this Poem, as well as in others, speaks openly of his tastes and passions: his own fortunes are dwelt on with painful minuteness, and his errors are recorded with the accuracy, but not the seriousness of the confessional. He seems to have been fond of taking himself to task. It was written when "Hungry ruin had him in the wind," and emigration to the West Indies was the only refuge which he could think of, or his friends suggest, from the persecutions of fortune.]

A' ye wha live by sowps o' drink,  
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,  
A' ye wha live and never think,  
Come, mourn wi' me!  
Our billie's gien us a' a jink,  
An' owre the sea.  
Lament him a' ye rantin' core,  
Wha dearly like a random-splore,  
Nae mair he'll join the merry roar  
In social key;  
For now he's taen anither shore,  
An' owre the sea!  
The bonnie lasses weel may wiss him,  
And in their dear petitions place him;  
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him,  
Wi' tearfu' e'e;  
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him  
That's owre the sea!  
O Fortune, they hae room to grumble!  
Hadst thou taen' aff some drowsy bummle  
Wha can do nought but fyke and fumble,  
'Twad been nae plea,  
But he was gleg as onie wumble,  
That's owre the sea!  
Auld, cantie Kyle may weepers wear,  
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear;  
'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear,

In flinders flee;  
He was her laureate monie a year,  
That's owre the sea!  
He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west  
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;  
A jillet brak his heart at last,  
Ill may she be!  
So, took a birth afore the mast,  
An' owre the sea.  
To tremble under fortune's cummock,  
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,  
Wi' his proud, independent stomach,  
Could ill agree;  
So, row't his hurdies in a hammock,  
An' owre the sea.  
He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,  
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;  
Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding:  
He dealt it free;  
The muse was a' that he took pride in,  
That's owre the sea.  
Jamaica bodies, use him weel,  
An' hap him in a cozie biel;  
Ye'll find him ay a dainty chiel,  
And fou o' glee;  
He wad na wrang'd the vera deil,  
That's owre the sea.  
Fareweel, my rhyme-composing billie!

Your native soil was right ill-willie;  
But may ye flourish like a lily,  
Now bonnilie!  
I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie,  
Tho' owre the sea!

## LI. THE FAREWELL

*“The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?  
Or what does he regard his single woes?  
But when, alas! he multiplies himself,  
To dearer selves, to the lov'd tender fair,  
The those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,  
To helpless children! then, O then! he feels  
The point of misery fest'ring in his heart,  
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.  
Such, such am I! undone.”*

**Thomson.**

[In these serious stanzas, where the comic, as in the lines to the Scottish bard, are not permitted to mingle, Burns bids farewell to all on whom his heart had any claim. He seems to have looked on the sea as only a place of peril, and on the West Indies as a charnel-house.]

I.

Farewell, old Scotia's bleak domains,

Far dearer than the torrid plains  
Where rich ananas blow!  
Farewell, a mother's blessing dear!  
A brother's sigh! a sister's tear!  
My Jean's heart-rending thro'e!  
Farewell, my Bess! tho' thou'rt bereft  
Of my parental care,  
A faithful brother I have left,  
My part in him thou'lt share!  
Adieu too, to you too,  
My Smith, my bosom frien';  
When kindly you mind me,  
O then befriend my Jean!

II.

What bursting anguish tears my heart!  
From thee, my Jeany, must I part!  
Thou weeping answ'rest—"No!"  
Alas! misfortune stares my face,  
And points to ruin and disgrace,  
I for thy sake must go!  
Thee, Hamilton, and Aiken dear,  
A grateful, warm adieu;  
I, with a much-indebted tear,  
Shall still remember you!  
All-hail then, the gale then,  
Wafts me from thee, dear shore!  
It rustles, and whistles  
I'll never see thee more!

## LII. WRITTEN ON THE BLANK LEAF OF A COPY OF MY POEMS, PRESENTED TO AN OLD SWEETHEART, THEN MARRIED

[This is another of the poet's lamentations, at the prospect of "torrid climes" and the roars of the Atlantic. To Burns, Scotland was the land of promise, the west of Scotland his paradise; and the land of dread, Jamaica! I found these lines copied by the poet into a volume which he presented to Dr. Geddes: they were addressed, it is thought, to the "Dear E." of his earliest correspondence.]

Once fondly lov'd and still remember'd dear;  
Sweet early object of my youthful vows!  
Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere,—  
Friendship! 'tis all cold duty now allows.  
And when you read the simple artless rhymes,  
One friendly sigh for him—he asks no more,—  
Who distant burns in flaming torrid climes,  
Or haply lies beneath th' Atlantic roar.

## LIII. A DEDICATION TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ

[The gentleman to whom these manly lines are addressed, was of good birth, and of an open and generous nature: he was one of the first of the gentry of the west to encourage the muse of Coila to stretch her wings at full length. His free life, and free speech, exposed him to the censures of that stern divine, Daddie Auld, who charged him with the sin of absenting himself from church for three successive days; for having, without the fear of God's servant before him, profanely said damn it, in his presence, and far having galloped on Sunday. These charges were contemptuously dismissed by the presbyterial court. Hamilton was the brother of the Charlotte to whose charms, on the banks of Devon, Burns, it is said, paid the homage of a lover, as well as of a poet. The poem had a place in the Kilmarnock edition, but not as an express dedication.]

Expect na, Sir, in this narration,  
A fleechin', fleth'rin dedication,  
To roose you up, an' ca' you guid,  
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid,  
Because ye're surnam'd like his Grace;  
Perhaps related to the race;  
Then when I'm tir'd—and sae are ye,  
Wi' monie a fulsome, sinfu' lie,  
Set up a face, how I stop short,



For fear your modesty be hurt.  
This may do—maun do, Sir, wi' them wha  
Maun please the great folk for a wamefou;  
For me! sae laigh I needna bow,  
For, Lord be thankit, I can plough;  
And when I downa yoke a naig,  
Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg;  
Sae I shall say, an' that's nae flatt'rin',  
It's just sic poet, an' sic patron.  
The Poet, some guid angel help him,  
Or else, I fear some ill ane skelp him,  
He may do weel for a' he's done yet,  
But only—he's no just begun yet.  
The Patron, (Sir, ye maun forgie me,  
I winna lie, come what will o' me,)  
On ev'ry hand it will allow'd be,  
He's just—nae better than he should be.  
I readily and freely grant,  
He downa see a poor man want;  
What's no his ain, he winna tak it;  
What ance he says, he winna break it;  
Ought he can lend he'll no refus't,  
'Till aft his guidness is abus'd;  
And rascals whyles that do him wrang,  
E'en that, he does na mind it lang:  
As master, landlord, husband, father,  
He does na fail his part in either.  
But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;

Nae godly symptom ye can ca' that;  
It's naething but a milder feature,  
Of our poor sinfu', corrupt nature:  
Ye'll get the best o' moral works,  
'Mang black Gentoos and pagan Turks,  
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi,  
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.  
That he's the poor man's friend in need,  
The gentleman in word and deed,  
It's no thro' terror of damnation;  
It's just a carnal inclination.  
Morality, thou deadly bane,  
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!  
Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is  
In moral mercy, truth and justice!  
No—stretch a point to catch a plack;  
Abuse a brother to his back;  
Steal thro' a winnock frae a whore,  
But point the rake that taks the door;  
Be to the poor like onie whunstane,  
And haud their noses to the grunstane,  
Ply ev'ry art o' legal thieving;  
No matter—stick to sound believing.  
Learn three-mile pray'rs an' half-mile graces,  
Wi' weel-spread looves, and lang wry faces;  
Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,  
And damn a' parties but your own;  
I'll warrant then, ye're nae deceiver,

A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.  
O ye wha leave the springs o' Calvin,  
For gumlie dubs of your ain delvin'!  
Ye sons of heresy and error,  
Ye'll some day squeal in quaking terror!  
When Vengeance draws the sword in wrath,  
And in the fire throws the sheath;  
When Ruin, with his sweeping besom,  
Just frets 'till Heav'n commission gies him:  
While o'er the harp pale Mis'ry moans,  
And strikes the ever-deep'ning tones,  
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans!  
Your pardon, Sir, for this digression.  
I maist forgat my dedication;  
But when divinity comes cross me  
My readers still are sure to lose me.  
So, Sir, ye see 'twas nae daft vapour,  
But I maturely thought it proper,  
When a' my works I did review,  
To dedicate them, Sir, to you:  
Because (ye need na tak it ill)  
I thought them something like yoursel'.  
Then patronize them wi' your favour,  
And your petitioner shall ever—  
I had amaist said, ever pray,  
But that's a word I need na say:  
For prayin' I hae little skill o't;  
I'm baith dead sweer, an' wretched ill o't;

But I'se repeat each poor man's pray'r,  
That kens or hears about you, Sir—  
“May ne'er misfortune's gowling bark,  
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the Clerk!  
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart,  
For that same gen'rous spirit smart!  
May Kennedy's far-honour'd name  
Lang beet his hymeneal flame,  
Till Hamiltons, at least a dizen,  
Are frae their nuptial labours risen:  
Five bonnie lasses round their table,  
And seven braw fellows, stout an' able  
To serve their king and country weel,  
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!  
May health and peace, with mutual rays,  
Shine on the ev'ning o' his days;  
'Till his wee curlie John's-ier-oe,  
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,  
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow.”  
I will not wind a lang conclusion,  
With complimentary effusion:  
But whilst your wishes and endeavours  
Are blest with Fortune's smiles and favours,  
I am, dear Sir, with zeal most fervent,  
Your much indebted, humble servant.  
But if (which pow'rs above prevent)  
That iron-hearted carl, Want,  
Attended in his grim advances

By sad mistakes and black mischances,  
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,  
Make you as poor a dog as I am,  
Your humble servant then no more;  
For who would humbly serve the poor!  
But by a poor man's hope in Heav'n!  
While recollection's pow'r is given,  
If, in the vale of humble life,  
The victim sad of fortune's strife,  
I, thro' the tender gushing tear,  
Should recognise my Master dear,  
If friendless, low, we meet together,  
Then Sir, your hand—my friend and brother.

#### LIV. ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAU

[Cromek found these verses among the loose papers of Burns, and printed them in the *Reliques*. They contain a portion of the character of the poet, record his habitual carelessness in worldly affairs, and his desire to be distinguished.]

Now Robin lies in his last lair,  
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair,  
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,  
Nae mair shall fear him;

Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,  
E'er mair come near him.  
To tell the truth, they seldom fash't him,  
Except the moment that they crush't him;  
For sune as chance or fate had hush't 'em,  
Tho' e'er sae short,  
Then wi' a rhyme or song he lash't 'em,  
And thought it sport.  
Tho' he was bred to kintra wark,  
And counted was baith wight and stark.  
Yet that was never Robin's mark  
To mak a man;  
But tell him he was learned and clark,  
Ye roos'd him than!

## **LV. LETTER TO JAMES TENNANT, OF GLENCONNER**

[The west country farmer to whom this letter was sent was a social man. The poet depended on his judgment in the choice of a farm, when he resolved to quit the harp for the plough: but as Ellisland was his choice, his skill may be questioned.]

Auld comrade dear, and brither sinner,  
How's a' the folk about Glenconner?  
How do you this blae eastlin wind,

That's like to blaw a body blind?  
For me, my faculties are frozen,  
My dearest member nearly dozen'd,  
I've sent you here, by Johnie Simson,  
Twa sage philosophers to glimpse on;  
Smith, wi' his sympathetic feeling,  
An' Reid, to common sense appealing.  
Philosophers have fought and wrangled,  
An' meikle Greek and Latin mangled,  
Till wi' their logic-jargon tir'd,  
An' in the depth of science mir'd,  
To common sense they now appeal,  
What wives and wabsters see and feel.  
But, hark ye, friend! I charge you strictly  
Peruse them, an' return them quickly,  
For now I'm grown sae cursed douce  
I pray and ponder butt the house,  
My shins, my lane, I there sit roastin',  
Perusing Bunyan, Brown, an' Boston;  
Till by an' by, if I haud on,  
I'll grunt a real gospel groan:  
Already I begin to try it,  
To cast my e'en up like a pyet,  
When by the gun she tumbles o'er,  
Flutt'ring an' gasping in her gore:  
Sae shortly you shall see me bright,  
A burning and a shining light.  
My heart-warm love to guid auld Glen,

The ace an' wale of honest men:  
When bending down wi' auld gray hairs,  
Beneath the load of years and cares,  
May He who made him still support him,  
An' views beyond the grave comfort him,  
His worthy fam'ly far and near,  
God bless them a' wi' grace and gear!  
My auld schoolfellow, preacher Willie,  
The manly tar, my mason Billie,  
An' Auchenbay, I wish him joy;  
If he's a parent, lass or boy,  
May he be dad, and Meg the mither,  
Just five-and-forty years thegither!  
An' no forgetting wabster Charlie,  
I'm tauld he offers very fairly.  
An' Lord, remember singing Sannock,  
Wi' hale breeks, saxpence, an' a bannock,  
An' next my auld acquaintance, Nancy,  
Since she is fitted to her fancy;  
An' her kind stars hae airted till her  
A good chiel wi' a pickle siller.  
My kindest, best respects I sen' it,  
To cousin Kate, an' sister Janet;  
Tell them, frae me, wi' chiels be cautious,  
For, faith, they'll aiblins fin' them fashious;  
To grant a heart is fairly civil,  
But to grant the maidenhead's the devil  
An' lastly, Jamie, for yoursel',



May guardian angels tak a spell,  
An' steer you seven miles south o' hell:  
But first, before you see heaven's glory,  
May ye get monie a merry story,  
Monie a laugh, and monie a drink,  
And aye eneugh, o' needfu' clink.  
Now fare ye weel, an' joy be wi' you,  
For my sake this I beg it o' you.  
Assist poor Simson a' ye can,  
Ye'll fin' him just an honest man;  
Sae I conclude, and quat my chanter,  
Your's, saint or sinner,  
Rob the Ranter.

## LVI. ON THE BIRTH OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD

[From letters addressed by Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, it would appear that this "Sweet Flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love," was the only son of her daughter, Mrs. Henri, who had married a French gentleman. The mother soon followed the father to the grave: she died in the south of France, whither she had gone in search of health.]

Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love,  
And ward o' mony a pray'r,

What heart o' stane wad thou na move,  
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair!  
November hirkles o'er the lea,  
Chill on thy lovely form;  
And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree,  
Should shield thee frae the storm.  
May He who gives the rain to pour,  
And wings the blast to blaw,  
Protect thee frae the driving show'r,  
The bitter frost and snaw!  
May He, the friend of woe and want,  
Who heals life's various stounds,  
Protect and guard the mother-plant,  
And heal her cruel wounds!  
But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,  
Fair on the summer-morn:  
Now feebly bends she in the blast,  
Unshelter'd and forlorn.  
Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,  
Unscath'd by ruffian hand!  
And from thee many a parent stem  
Arise to deck our land!

**LVII. TO MISS CRUIKSHANK, A VERY  
YOUNG LADY. WRITTEN ON THE BLANK  
LEAF OF A BOOK, PRESENTED TO HER  
BY THE AUTHOR**

[The beauteous rose-bud of this poem was one of the daughters of Mr. Cruikshank, a master in the High School of Edinburgh, at whose table Burns was a frequent guest during the year of hope which he spent in the northern metropolis.]

Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,  
Blooming in thy early May,  
Never may'st thou, lovely flow'r,  
Chilly shrink in sleety show'r!  
Never Boreas' hoary path,  
Never Eurus' poisonous breath,  
Never baleful stellar lights,  
Taint thee with untimely blights!  
Never, never reptile thief  
Riot on thy virgin leaf!  
Nor even Sol too fiercely view  
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!  
May'st thou long, sweet crimson gem,  
Richly deck thy native stem:  
'Till some evening, sober, calm,  
Dropping dews and breathing balm,  
While all around the woodland rings,  
And ev'ry bird thy requiem sings;  
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,  
Shed thy dying honours round,  
And resign to parent earth

The loveliest form she e'er gave birth.

## LVIII. WILLIE CHALMERS

[Lockhart first gave this poetic curiosity to the world: he copied it from a small manuscript volume of Poems given by Burns to Lady Harriet Don, with an explanation in these words: "W. Chalmers, a gentleman in Ayrshire, a particular friend of mine, asked me to write a poetic epistle to a young lady, his Dulcinea. I had seen her, but was scarcely acquainted with her, and wrote as follows." Chalmers was a writer in Ayr. I have not heard that the lady was influenced by this volunteer effusion: ladies are seldom rhymed into the matrimonial snare.]

I.

Wi' braw new branks in mickle pride,  
And eke a braw new brechan,  
My Pegasus I'm got astride,  
And up Parnassus pechin;  
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush  
The doitie beastie stammers;  
Then up he gets and off he sets  
For sake o' Willie Chalmers.

II.

I doubt na, lass, that weel kenn'd name

May cost a pair o' blushes;  
I am nae stranger to your fame,  
Nor his warm urged wishes.  
Your bonnie face sae mild and sweet  
His honest heart enamours,  
And faith ye'll no be lost a whit,  
Tho' waired on Willie Chalmers.

III.

Auld Truth hersel' might swear ye're fair,  
And Honour safely back her,  
And Modesty assume your air,  
And ne'er a ane mistak' her:  
And sic twa love-inspiring een  
Might fire even holy Palmers;  
Nae wonder then they've fatal been  
To honest Willie Chalmers.

IV.

I doubt na fortune may you shore  
Some mim-mou'd pouthered priestie,  
Fu' lifted up wi' Hebrew lore,  
And band upon his breastie:  
But Oh! what signifies to you  
His lexicons and grammars;  
The feeling heart's the royal blue,  
And that's wi' Willie Chalmers.

V.

Some gapin' glowrin' countra laird,  
May warstle for your favour;

May claw his lug, and straik his beard,  
And hoast up some palaver.  
My bonnie maid, before ye wed  
Sic clumsy-witted hammers,  
Seek Heaven for help, and barefit skelp  
Awa' wi' Willie Chalmers.

VI.

Forgive the Bard! my fond regard  
For ane that shares my bosom,  
Inspires my muse to gie 'm his dues,  
For de'il a hair I roose him.  
May powers aboon unite you soon,  
And fructify your amours,—  
And every year come in mair dear

To you and Willie Chalmers.

**LIX. LYING AT A REVEREND FRIEND'S  
HOUSE ON NIGHT, THE AUTHOR LEFT  
THE FOLLOWING VERSES IN THE ROOM  
WHERE HE SLEPT**

[Of the origin of those verses Gilbert Burns gives the following account. "The first time Robert heard the spinet played was at the house of Dr. Lawrie, then minister of Loudon, now in Glasgow. Dr. Lawrie has

several daughters; one of them played; the father and the mother led down the dance; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the poet and the other guests mixed in it. It was a delightful family scene for our poet, then lately introduced to the world; his mind was roused to a poetic enthusiasm, and the stanzas were left in the room where he slept.”]

I.

O thou dread Power, who reign’st above!  
I know thou wilt me hear,  
When for this scene of peace and love  
I make my prayer sincere.

II.

The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,  
Long, long, be pleased to spare;  
To bless his filial little flock  
And show what good men are.

III.

She who her lovely offspring eyes  
With tender hopes and fears,  
O, bless her with a mother’s joys,  
But spare a mother’s tears!

IV.

Their hope—their stay—their darling youth,  
In manhood’s dawning blush—  
Bless him, thou God of love and truth,  
Up to a parent’s wish!

V.

The beauteous, seraph sister-band,  
With earnest tears I pray,  
Thous know'st the snares on ev'ry hand—  
Guide Thou their steps alway.

VI.

When soon or late they reach that coast,  
O'er life's rough ocean driven,  
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,  
A family in Heaven!

## LX. TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE

(RECOMMENDING A BOY)

[Verse seems to have been the natural language of Burns. The Master Tootie whose skill he records, lived in Mauchline, and dealt in cows: he was an artful and contriving person, great in bargaining and intimate with all the professional tricks by which old cows are made to look young, and six-pint hawkies pass for those of twelve.]

*Mossgiel, May 3, 1786.*

I.

I hold it, Sir, my bounden duty,  
To warn you how that Master Tootie,



Alias, Laird M'Gaun,  
Was here to hire yon lad away  
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,  
An' wad ha'e done't aff han':  
But lest he learn the callan tricks,  
As, faith, I muckle doubt him,  
Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks,  
An' tellin' lies about them;  
As lieve then, I'd have then,  
Your clerkship he should sair,  
If sae be, ye may be  
Not fitted otherwhere.

II.

Altho' I say't, he's gleg enough,  
An' bout a house that's rude an' rough  
The boy might learn to swear;  
But then, wi' you, he'll be sae taught,  
An' get sic fair example straught,  
I havena ony fear.

Ye'll catechize him every quirk,  
An' shore him weel wi' Hell;  
An' gar him follow to the kirk—  
—Ay when ye gang yoursel'.

If ye then, maun be then  
Frae hame this comin' Friday;  
Then please Sir, to lea'e Sir,  
The orders wi' your lady.

III.

My word of honour I hae gien,  
In Paisley John's, that night at e'n,  
To meet the Warld's worm;  
To try to get the twa to gree,  
An' name the airles<sup>56</sup> an' the fee,  
In legal mode an' form:  
I ken he weel a snick can draw,  
When simple bodies let him;  
An' if a Devil be at a',  
In faith he's sure to get him.  
To phrase you, an' praise you,  
Ye ken your Laureat scorns:  
The pray'r still, you share still,  
Of grateful Minstrel Burns.

## LXI. TO MR. M'ADAM, OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN

[It seems that Burns, delighted with the praise which the Laird of Craigen-Gillan bestowed on his verses,—probably the Jolly Beggars, then in the hands of Woodburn, his steward,—poured out this little unpremeditated natural acknowledgment.]

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<sup>56</sup> The airles—earnest money.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card,  
I trow it made me proud;  
See wha tak's notice o' the bard  
I lap and cry'd fu' loud.  
Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,  
The senseless, gawky million:  
I'll cock my nose aboon them a'—  
I'm roos'd by Craigen-Gillan!  
'Twas noble, Sir; 'twas like yoursel',  
To grant your high protection:  
A great man's smile, ye ken fu' well,  
Is ay a blest infection.

Tho' by his<sup>57</sup> banes who in a tub  
Match'd Macedonian Sandy!  
On my ain legs thro' dirt and dub,  
I independent stand ay.—  
And when those legs to gude, warm kail,  
Wi' welcome canna bear me;  
A lee dyke-side, a sybow-tail,  
And barley-scone shall cheer me.  
Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath  
O' many flow'ry simmers!  
And bless your bonnie lasses baith,  
I'm tauld they're loosome kimmers!  
And God bless young Dunaskin's laird,

---

57 Diogenes.

The blossom of our gentry!  
And may he wear an auld man's beard,  
A credit to his country.

## LXII. ANSWER TO A POETICAL EPISTLE SENT TO THE AUTHOR BY A TAILOR

[The person who in the name of a Tailor took the liberty of admonishing Burns about his errors, is generally believed to have been William Simpson, the schoolmaster of Ochiltree: the verses seem about the measure of his capacity, and were attributed at the time to his hand. The natural poet took advantage of the mask in which the made poet concealed himself, and rained such a merciless storm upon him, as would have extinguished half the Tailors in Ayrshire, and made the amazed dominie

*“Strangely fidge and fyke.”*

It was first printed in 1801, by Stewart.]

What ails ye now, ye lousie b–h,  
To thresh my back at sic a pitch?  
Losh, man! hae mercy wi' your natch,  
Your bodkin's bauld,  
I didna suffer ha'f sae much  
Frae Daddie Auld.  
What tho' at times when I grow crouse,

I gie their wames a random pouce,  
Is that enough for you to souse  
Your servant sae?  
Gae mind your seam, ye prick-the-louse,  
An' jag-the-flae.  
King David o' poetic brief,  
Wrought 'mang the lasses sic mischief,  
As fill'd his after life wi' grief,  
An' bluidy rants,  
An' yet he's rank'd amang the chief  
O' lang-syne saunts.  
And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants,  
My wicked rhymes, an' druken rants,  
I'll gie auld cloven Cloutie's haunts  
An unco' slip yet,  
An' snugly sit among the saunts  
At Davie's hip get.  
But fegs, the Session says I maun  
Gae fa' upo' anither plan,  
Than garrin lasses cowp the cran  
Clean heels owre body,  
And sairly thole their mither's ban  
Afore the howdy.  
This leads me on, to tell for sport,  
How I did wi' the Session sort,  
Auld Clinkum at the inner port  
Cried three times—"Robin!  
Come hither, lad, an' answer for't,

Ye're blamed for jobbin'."  
Wi' pinch I pat a Sunday's face on,  
An' snoov'd away before the Session;  
I made an open fair confession—  
I scorn'd to lee;  
An' syne Mess John, beyond expression,  
Fell foul o' me.

### LXIII. TO J. RANKINE

[With the Laird of Adamhill's personal character the reader is already acquainted: the lady about whose frailties the rumour alluded to was about to rise, has not been named, and it would neither be delicate nor polite to guess.]

I am a keeper of the law  
In some sma' points, altho' not a';  
Some people tell me gin I fa'  
Ae way or ither.  
The breaking of ae point, though sma',  
Breaks a' thegither  
I hae been in for't once or twice,  
And winna say o'er far for thrice,  
Yet never met with that surprise  
That broke my rest,  
But now a rumour's like to rise,

A whaup's i' the nest.

## LXIV. LINES WRITTEN ON A BANK-NOTE

[The bank-note on which these characteristic lines were endorsed, came into the hands of the late James Gracie, banker in Dumfries: he knew the handwriting of Burns, and kept it as a curiosity. The concluding lines point to the year 1786, as the date of the composition.]

Wae worth thy power, thou cursed leaf,  
Fell source o' a' my woe an' grief;  
For lack o' thee I've lost my lass,  
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass.  
I see the children of affliction  
Unaided, through thy cursed restriction  
I've seen the oppressor's cruel smile  
Amid his hapless victim's spoil:  
And for thy potence vainly wished,  
To crush the villain in the dust.  
For lack o' thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore,  
Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more.  
R. B.

## LXV. A DREAM

*“Thoughts, words, and deeds, the statute blames with reason;*

*But surely dreams were ne'er indicted treason.”*

**On reading, in the public papers, the “Laureate’s Ode,” with the other parade of June 4th, 1786, the author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the birth-day levee; and, in his dreaming fancy, made the following “Address.”**

[The prudent friends of the poet remonstrated with him about this Poem, which they appeared to think would injure his fortunes and stop the royal bounty to which he was thought entitled. Mrs. Dunlop, and Mrs. Stewart, of Stair, solicited him in vain to omit it in the Edinburgh edition of his poems. I know of no poem for which a claim of being prophetic would be so successfully set up: it is full of point as well as of the future. The allusions require no comment.]

Guid-mornin’ to your Majesty!  
May Heaven augment your blisses,  
On ev’ry new birth-day ye see,  
A humble poet wishes!  
My bardship here, at your levee,  
On sic a day as this is,  
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,  
Amang thae birth-day dresses  
Sae fine this day.



I see ye're complimented thrang,  
By many a lord an' lady;  
"God save the King!" 's a cuckoo sang  
That's unco easy said ay;  
The poets, too, a venal gang,  
Wi' rhymes weel-turn'd and ready,  
Wad gar you trow ye ne'er do wrang,  
But ay unerring steady,  
On sic a day.

For me, before a monarch's face,  
Ev'n there I winna flatter;  
For neither pension, post, nor place,  
Am I your humble debtor:  
So, nae reflection on your grace,  
Your kingship to bespatter;  
There's monie waur been o' the race,  
And aiblins ane been better  
Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sov'reign king,  
My skill may weel be doubted:  
But facts are chiels that winna ding,  
An' downa be disputed:  
Your royal nest beneath your wing,  
Is e'en right reft an' clouted,  
And now the third part of the string,  
An' less, will gang about it  
Than did ae day.  
Far be't frae me that I aspire

To blame your legislation,  
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire,  
To rule this mighty nation.  
But faith! I muckle doubt, my sire,  
Ye've trusted ministration  
To chaps, wha, in a barn or byre,  
Wad better fill'd their station  
Than courts yon day.  
And now ye've gien auld Britain peace,  
Her broken shins to plaister;  
Your sair taxation does her fleece,  
Till she has scarce a tester;  
For me, thank God, my life's a lease,  
Nae bargain wearing faster,  
Or, faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,  
I shortly boost to pasture  
I' the craft some day.  
I'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,  
When taxes he enlarges,  
(An' Will's a true guid fallow's get,  
A name not envy spairges,)  
That he intends to pay your debt,  
An' lessen a' your charges;  
But, G-d-sake! let nae saving-fit  
Abridge your bonnie barges  
An' boats this day.  
Adieu, my Liege! may freedom geck  
Beneath your high protection;

An' may ye rax corruption's neck,  
And gie her for dissection!  
But since I'm here, I'll no neglect,  
In loyal, true affection,  
To pay your Queen, with due respect,  
My fealty an' subjection  
This great birth-day  
Hail, Majesty Most Excellent!  
While nobles strive to please ye,  
Will ye accept a compliment  
A simple poet gi'es ye?  
Thae bonnie bairntime, Heav'n has lent,  
Still higher may they heeze ye  
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,  
For ever to release ye  
Frae care that day.  
For you, young potentate o' Wales,  
I tell your Highness fairly,  
Down pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,  
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;  
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,  
An' curse your folly sairly,  
That e'er ye brak Diana's pales,  
Or rattl'd dice wi' Charlie,  
By night or day.  
Yet aft a ragged cowte's been known  
To mak a noble aiver;  
So, ye may doucely fill a throne,

For a' their clish-ma-claver:  
There, him at Agincourt wha shone,  
Few better were or braver;  
And yet, wi' funny, queer Sir John,  
He was an unco shaver  
For monie a day.  
For you, right rev'rend Osnaburg,  
Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,  
Altho' a ribbon at your lug,  
Wad been a dress completer:  
As ye disown yon paughty dog  
That bears the keys of Peter,  
Then, swith! an' get a wife to hug,  
Or, trowth! ye'll stain the mitre  
Some luckless day.  
Young, royal Tarry Breeks, I learn,  
Ye've lately come athwart her;  
A glorious galley,<sup>58</sup> stem an' stern,  
Weel rigg'd for Venus' barter;  
But first hang out, that she'll discern  
Your hymeneal charter,  
Then heave aboard your grapple airn,  
An', large upon her quarter,  
Come full that day.

---

58 Alluding to the newspaper account of a certain royal sailor's  
amour

Ye, lastly, bonnie blossoms a',  
Ye royal lasses dainty,  
Heav'n mak you guid as weel as braw,  
An' gie you lads a-plenty:  
But sneer na British Boys awa',  
For kings are unco scant ay;  
An' German gentles are but sma',  
They're better just than want ay  
On onie day.  
God bless you a'! consider now,  
Ye're unco muckle dautet;  
But ere the course o' life be thro',  
It may be bitter sautet:  
An' I hae seen their coggie fou,  
That yet hae tarrow't at it;  
But or the day was done, I trow,  
The laggen they hae clautet  
Fu' clean that day.

## LXVI. A BARD'S EPITAPH



[This beautiful and affecting poem was printed in the Kilmarnock edition: Wordsworth writes with his usual taste and feeling about it: “Whom did the poet intend should be thought of, as occupying that grave, over which, after modestly setting forth the moral discernment and warm affections of the ‘poor inhabitant’ it is supposed to be inscribed that

*‘Thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stained his name!’*

Who but himself—himself anticipating the but

too probable termination of his own course? Here is a sincere and solemn avowal—a confession at once devout, poetical, and human—a history in the shape of a prophecy! What more was required of the biographer, than to have put his seal to the writing, testifying that the foreboding had been realized and that the record was authentic?”]

Is there a whim-inspired fool,  
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,  
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,  
Let him draw near;  
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,  
And drap a tear.  
Is there a bard of rustic song,  
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,  
That weekly this area throng,  
O, pass not by!  
But with a frater-feeling strong,  
Here heave a sigh.  
Is there a man, whose judgment clear,  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,  
Wild as the wave;  
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,  
Survey this grave.  
The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn and wise to know,

And keenly felt the friendly glow,  
And softer flame,  
But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stain'd his name!  
Reader, attend—whether thy soul  
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,  
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,  
In low pursuit;  
Know, prudent, cautious self-control,  
Is wisdom's root.

## LXVII. THE TWA DOGS. A TALE

[Cromek, an anxious and curious inquirer, informed me, that the Twa Dogs was in a half-finished state, when the poet consulted John Wilson, the printer, about the Kilmarnock edition. On looking over the manuscripts, the printer, with a sagacity common to his profession, said, "The Address to the Deil" and "The Holy Fair" were grand things, but it would be as well to have a calmer and sedater strain, to put at the front of the volume. Burns was struck with the remark, and on his way home to Mossgiel, completed the Poem, and took it next day to Kilmarnock, much to the satisfaction of "Wee Johnnie." On the 17th February Burns says to John Richmond, of Mauchline, "I have completed my Poem of the Twa Dogs, but have not shown it to the



world.” It is difficult to fix the dates with anything like accuracy, to compositions which are not struck off at one heat of the fancy. “Luath was one of the poet’s dogs, which some person had wantonly killed,” says Gilbert Burns; “but Cæsar was merely the creature of the imagination.” The Ettrick Shepherd, a judge of collies, says that Luath is true to the life, and that many a hundred times he has seen the dogs bark for very joy, when the cottage children were merry.]

Twas in that place o’ Scotland’s isle  
That bears the name o’ Auld King Coil,  
Upon a bonnie day in June,  
When wearing through the afternoon,  
Twa dogs that were na thrang at hame,  
Forgather’d ance upon a time.  
The first I’ll name, they ca’d him Cæsar,  
Was keepit for his honour’s pleasure;  
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,  
Show’d he was nane o’ Scotland’s dogs;  
But whalpit some place far abroad,  
Where sailors gang to fish for cod.  
His locked, letter’d, braw brass collar  
Show’d him the gentleman and scholar;  
But though he was o’ high degree,  
The fient a pride—nae pride had he;  
But wad hae spent an hour caressin’,  
Ev’n wi’ a tinkler-gypsey’s messin’.

At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,  
Nae tawted tyke, though e'er sae duddie,  
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,  
And stroan't on stanes and hillocks wi' him.  
The tither was a ploughman's collie,  
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,  
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,  
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,  
After some dog in Highland sang,<sup>59</sup>  
Was made lang syne—Lord know how lang.  
He was a gash an' faithful tyke,  
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.  
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,  
Ay gat him friends in ilka place.  
His breast was white, his touzie back  
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;  
His gaucie tail, wi' upward curl,  
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl.  
Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,  
An' unco pack an' thick thegither;  
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit,  
Whyles mice and moudiewarts they howkit;  
Whyles scour'd awa in lang excursion,  
An' worry'd ither in diversion;  
Until wi' daffin weary grown,

---

59 Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's Fingal.

Upon a knowe they sat them down,  
And there began a lang digression  
About the lords o' the creation.

**Cæsar .**

I've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,  
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;  
An' when the gentry's life I saw,  
What way poor bodies liv'd ava.  
Our laird gets in his racked rents,  
His coals, his kain, and a' his stents;  
He rises when he likes himsel';  
His flunkies answer at the bell;  
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse;  
He draws a bonnie silken purse  
As lang's my tail, whare, through the steeks,  
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.  
Frae morn to e'en its nought but toiling,  
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;  
An' though the gentry first are stechin,  
Yet even the ha' folk fill their pechan  
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sic like trashtrie,  
That's little short o' downright wastrie.  
Our whipper-in, wee, blastit wonner,  
Poor worthless elf, eats a dinner,  
Better than ony tenant man  
His honour has in a' the lan';  
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in,  
I own it's past my comprehension.

## **Luath .**

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't eneugh  
A cotter howkin in a sheugh,  
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dyke,  
Baring a quarry, and sic like;  
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,  
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans,  
An' nought but his han' darg, to keep  
Them right and tight in thack an' rape.  
An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,  
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,  
Ye maist wad think a wee touch langer  
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;  
But, how it comes, I never kenn'd yet,  
They're maistly wonderfu' contented:  
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies,  
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

## **Cæsar .**

But then to see how ye're negleckit,  
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrespeckit!  
L—d, man, our gentry care as little  
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;  
They gang as saucy by poor folk,  
As I wad by a stinking brock.  
I've notic'd, on our Laird's court-day,  
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,  
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,  
How they maun thole a factor's snash:

He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,  
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear;  
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,  
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!  
I see how folk live that hae riches;  
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

### **Luath .**

They're no sae wretched's ane wad think;  
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink:  
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,  
The view o't gies them little fright.  
Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,  
They're ay in less or mair provided;  
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,  
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.  
The dearest comfort o' their lives,  
Their grushie weans, an' faithfu' wives;  
The prattling things are just their pride,  
That sweetens a' their fire-side;  
An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy  
Can mak' the bodies unco happy;  
They lay aside their private cares,  
To mind the Kirk and State affairs:  
They'll talk o' patronage and priests;  
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts;  
Or tell what new taxation's comin',  
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.  
As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,

They get the jovial, ranting kirns,  
When rural life, o' ev'ry station,  
Unite in common recreation;  
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth  
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.  
That merry day the year begins,  
They bar the door on frosty win's;  
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,  
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;  
The luntin pipe, an sneeshin mill,  
Are handed round wi' right guid will;  
The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse,  
The young anes rantin' thro' the house,—  
My heart has been sae fain to see them,  
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.  
Still it's owre true that ye hae said,  
Sic game is now owre aften play'd.  
There's monie a creditable stock  
O' decent, honest, fawsont folk,  
Are riven out baith root and branch,  
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,  
Wha thinks to knit himsel' the faster  
In favour wi' some gentle master,  
Wha aiblins, thrang a parliamentin',  
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—  
**Cæsar** .

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it!  
For Britain's guid! guid faith, I doubt it!

Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him,  
An' saying, aye or no's they bid him,  
At operas an' plays parading,  
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;  
Or may be, in a frolic daft,  
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,  
To mak a tour, an' tak' a whirl,  
To learn bon ton, an' see the worl'.  
There, at Vienna or Versailles,  
He rives his father's auld entails;  
Or by Madrid he takes the rout,  
To thrum guitars, an' fecht wi' nowt;  
Or down Italian vista startles,  
Wh—re-hunting amang groves o' myrtles  
Then bouses drumly German water,  
To mak' himsel' look fair and fatter,  
An' clear the consequential sorrows,  
Love-gifts of carnival signoras.  
For Britain's guid!—for her destruction  
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

### **Luath .**

Hech, man! dear sirs! is that the gate  
They waste sae mony a braw estate!  
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd  
For gear to gang that gate at last!  
O, would they stay aback frae courts,  
An' please themsels wi' countra sports,  
It wad for ev'ry ane be better,

The Laird, the Tenant, an' the Cotter!  
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,  
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;  
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,  
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,  
Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock,  
The ne'er a bit they're ill to poor folk.  
But will ye tell me, Master Cæsar,  
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?  
Nae cauld or hunger e'er can steer them,  
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

**Cæsar .**

L—d, man, were ye but whyles whare I am,  
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.  
It's true, they needna starve or sweat,  
Thro' winters cauld, or simmer's heat;  
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,  
An' fill auld age wi' grips an' granes:  
But human bodies are sic fools,  
For a' their colleges and schools,  
That when nae real ills perplex them,  
They mak enow themsels to vex them;  
An' ay the less they hae to sturt them,  
In like proportion, less will hurt them.  
A country fellow at the pleugh,  
His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;  
A country girl at her wheel,  
Her dizzen's done, she's unco weel:



But Gentlemen, an' Ladies warst,  
Wi' ev'n down want o' wark are curst.  
They loiter, lounging, lank, an' lazy;  
Tho' deil haet ails them, yet uneasy;  
Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless;  
Their nights unquiet, lang an' restless;  
An' even their sports, their balls an' races,  
Their galloping thro' public places,  
There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art,  
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.  
The men cast out in party matches,  
Then sowther a' in deep debauches;  
Ae night they're mad wi' drink and wh-ring,  
Niest day their life is past enduring.  
The Ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,  
As great and gracious a' as sisters;  
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,  
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.  
Whyles, o'er the wee bit cup an' platie,  
They sip the scandal potion pretty;  
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks  
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;  
Stake on a chance a farmer's stack-yard,  
An' cheat like onie unhang'd blackguard.  
There's some exception, man an' woman;  
But this is Gentry's life in common.  
By this, the sun was out o' sight,  
An' darker gloaming brought the night:

The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone;  
The kye stood rowtin i' the loan;  
When up they gat, and shook their lugs,  
Rejoic'd they were na men, but dogs;  
An' each took aff his several way,  
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

## LXVIII. LINES ON MEETING WITH LORD DAER

[“The first time I saw Robert Burns,” says Dugald Stewart, “was on the 23rd of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend, John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. My excellent and much-lamented friend, the late Basil, Lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and, by the kindness and frankness of his manners, left an impression on the mind of the poet which was never effaced. The verses which the poet wrote on the occasion are among the most imperfect of his pieces, but a few stanzas may perhaps be a matter of curiosity, both on account of the character to which they relate and the light which they throw on the situation and the feelings of the writer before his work was known to the public.” Basil, Lord Daer, the uncle of the present Earl of Selkirk, was born

in the year 1769, at the family seat of St. Mary's Isle: he distinguished himself early at school, and at college excelled in literature and science; he had a greater regard for democracy than was then reckoned consistent with his birth and rank. He was, when Burns met him, in his twenty-third year; was very tall, something careless in his dress, and had the taste and talent common to his distinguished family. He died in his thirty-third year.]

This wot ye all whom it concerns,  
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,  
October twenty-third,  
A ne'er-to-be-forgotten day,  
Sae far I sprachled up the brae,  
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.  
I've been at druken writers' feasts,  
Nay, been bitch-fou' 'mang godly priests,  
Wi' rev'rence be it spoken:  
I've even join'd the honour'd jorum,  
When mighty squireships of the quorum  
Their hydra drouth did sloken.  
But wi' a Lord—stand out, my shin!  
A Lord—a Peer—an Earl's son!—  
Up higher yet, my bonnet!  
And sic a Lord!—lang Scotch ells twa,  
Our Peerage he o'erlooks them a',  
As I look o'er my sonnet.

But, oh! for Hogarth's magic pow'r!  
To show Sir Bardie's willyart glow'r,  
And how he star'd and stammer'd,  
When goavan, as if led wi' branks,  
An' stumpan on his ploughman shanks,  
He in the parlour hammer'd.  
I sidling shelter'd in a nook,  
An' at his lordship steal't a look,  
Like some portentous omen;  
Except good sense and social glee,  
An' (what surpris'd me) modesty,  
I marked nought uncommon.  
I watch'd the symptoms o' the great,  
The gentle pride, the lordly state,  
The arrogant assuming;  
The fient a pride, nae pride had he,  
Nor sauce, nor state, that I could see,  
Mair than an honest ploughman.  
Then from his lordship I shall learn,  
Henceforth to meet with unconcern  
One rank as weel's another;  
Nae honest worthy man need care  
To meet with noble youthful Daer,  
For he but meets a brother.

## LXIX. ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH

[“I enclose you two poems,” said Burns to his friend Chalmers, “which I have carded and spun since I passed Glenbuck. One blank in the Address to Edinburgh, ‘Fair B—,’ is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness the great Creator has formed, since Milton’s Eve, on the first day of her existence.” Lord Monboddo made himself ridiculous by his speculations on human nature, and acceptable by his kindly manners and suppers in the manner of the ancients, where his viands were spread under ambrosial lights, and his Falernian was wreathed with flowers. At these suppers Burns sometimes made his appearance. The “Address” was first printed in the Edinburgh edition: the poet’s hopes were then high, and his compliments, both to town and people, were elegant and happy.]

I.

Edina! Scotia’s darling seat!  
All hail thy palaces and tow’rs,  
Where once beneath a monarch’s feet  
Sat Legislation’s sov’ reign pow’rs!  
From marking wildly-scatter’d flow’rs,  
As on the banks of Ayr I stray’d,  
And singing, lone, the ling’ring hours,

I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

II.

Here wealth still swells the golden tide,  
As busy Trade his labour plies;  
There Architecture's noble pride  
Bids elegance and splendour rise;  
Here Justice, from her native skies,  
High wields her balance and her rod;  
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,  
Seeks Science in her coy abode.

III.

Thy sons, Edina! social, kind,  
With open arms the stranger hail;  
Their views enlarg'd, their liberal mind,  
Above the narrow, rural vale;  
Attentive still to sorrow's wail,  
Or modest merit's silent claim;  
And never may their sources fail!  
And never envy blot their name!

IV.

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn,  
Gay as the gilded summer sky,  
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,  
Dear as the raptur'd thrill of joy!  
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,  
Heav'n's beauties on my fancy shine;  
I see the Sire of Love on high,  
And own his work indeed divine!

V.

There, watching high the least alarms,  
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar,  
Like some bold vet'ran, gray in arms,  
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:  
The pond'rous wall and massy bar,  
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,  
Have oft withstood assailing war,  
And oft repell'd th' invader's shock.

VI.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,  
I view that noble, stately dome,  
Where Scotia's kings of other years,  
Fam'd heroes! had their royal home:  
Alas, how chang'd the times to come!  
Their royal name low in the dust!  
Their hapless race wild-wand'ring roam,  
Tho' rigid law cries out, 'twas just!

VII.

Wild beats my heart to trace your steps,  
Whose ancestors, in days of yore,  
Thro' hostile ranks and ruin'd gaps  
Old Scotia's bloody lion bore:  
Ev'n I who sing in rustic lore,  
Haply, my sires have left their shed,  
And fac'd grim danger's loudest roar,  
Bold-following where your fathers led!

VIII.

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!  
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,  
Where once beneath a monarch's feet  
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!  
From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,  
As on the hanks of Ayr I stray'd,  
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,  
I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

## LXX. EPISTLE TO MAJOR LOGAN

[Major Logan, of Camlarg, lived, when this hasty Poem was written, with his mother and sister at Parkhouse, near Ayr. He was a good musician, a joyous companion, and something of a wit. The Epistle was printed, for the first time, in my edition of Burns, in 1834, and since then no other edition has wanted it.]

Hail, thairm-inspirin', rattlin' Willie!  
Though fortune's road be rough an' hilly  
To every fiddling, rhyming billie,  
We never heed,  
But tak' it like the unback'd filly,  
Proud o' her speed.  
When idly goavan whyles we saunter  
Yirr, fancy barks, awa' we canter  
Uphill, down brae, till some mishanter,



Some black bog-hole,  
Arrests us, then the scathe an' banter  
We're forced to thole.  
Hale be your heart! Hale be your fiddle!  
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,  
To cheer you through the weary widdle  
O' this wild warl',  
Until you on a crummock driddle  
A gray-hair'd carl.  
Come wealth, come poortith, late or soon,  
Heaven send your heart-strings ay in tune,  
And screw your temper pins aboon  
A fifth or mair,  
The melancholious, lazy croon  
O' cankrie care.  
May still your life from day to day  
Nae "lente largo" in the play,  
But "allegretto forte" gay  
Harmonious flow:  
A sweeping, kindling, bauld strathspey—  
Encore! Bravo!  
A blessing on the cheery gang  
Wha dearly like a jig or sang,  
An' never think o' right an' wrang  
By square an' rule,  
But as the clegs o' feeling stang  
Are wise or fool.  
My hand-waled curse keep hard in chase

The harpy, hoodock, purse-proud race,  
Wha count on poortith as disgrace—  
Their tuneless hearts!  
May fireside discords jar a base  
To a' their parts!  
But come, your hand, my careless brither,  
I' th' ither warl', if there's anither,  
An' that there is I've little swither  
About the matter;  
We check for chow shall jog thegither,  
I'se ne'er bid better.  
We've faults and failings—granted clearly,  
We're frail backsliding mortals merely,  
Eve's bonny squad, priests wyte them sheerly  
For our grand fa';  
But stilt, but still, I like them dearly—  
God bless them a'!  
Ochon! for poor Castalian drinkers,  
When they fa' foul o' earthly jinkers,  
The witching curs'd delicious blinkers  
Hae put me hyte,  
And gart me weet my waukrife winkers,  
Wi' ginnan spite.  
But by yon moon!—and that's high swearin'—  
An' every star within my hearin'!  
An' by her een wha was a dear ane!  
I'll ne'er forget;  
I hope to gie the jads a clearin'

In fair play yet.  
My loss I mourn, but not repent it,  
I'll seek my pursie whare I tint it,  
Ance to the Indies I were wonted,  
Some cantraip hour,  
By some sweet elf I'll yet be dinted,  
Then, vive l'amour!  
Faites mes baisemains respectueuse,  
To sentimental sister Susie,  
An' honest Lucky; no to roose you,  
Ye may be proud,  
That sic a couple fate allows ye  
To grace your blood.  
Nae mair at present can I measure,  
An' trowth my rhymin' ware's nae treasure;  
But when in Ayr, some half-hour's leisure,  
Be't light, be't dark,  
Sir Bard will do himself the pleasure  
To call at Park.

*Robert Burns.*

*Mossgiel, 30th October, 1786.*

**LXXI. THE BRIGS OF AYR, A POEM,  
INSCRIBED TO J. BALLANTYNE, ESQ.,  
AYR**

[Burns took the hint of this Poem from the

Planestanes and Causeway of Fergusson, but all that lends it life and feeling belongs to his own heart and his native Ayr: he wrote it for the second edition of his poems, and in compliment to the patrons of his genius in the west. Ballantyne, to whom the Poem is inscribed, was generous when the distresses of his farming speculations pressed upon him: others of his friends figure in the scene: Montgomery's courage, the learning of Dugald Stewart, and condescension and kindness of Mrs. General Stewart, of Stair, are gratefully recorded.]

The simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,  
Learning his tuneful trade from ev'ry bough;  
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,  
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn  
bush:

The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,  
Or deep-ton'd plovers, gray, wild-whistling o'er  
the hill;

Shall he, nurst in the peasant's lowly shed,  
To hardy independence bravely bred,  
By early poverty to hardship steel'd,  
And train'd to arms in stern misfortune's field—  
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,  
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes?  
Or labour hard the panegyric close,  
With all the venal soul of dedicating prose?

No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,  
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,  
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,  
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward!  
Still, if some patron's gen'rous care he trace,  
Skill'd in the secret to bestow with grace;  
When Ballantyne befriends his humble name,  
And hands the rustic stranger up to fame,  
With heart-felt throes his grateful bosom swells,  
The godlike bliss, to give, alone excels.

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter hap,  
And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap;  
Potato-bings are snugged up frae skaith  
Of coming Winter's biting, frosty breath;  
The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer toils,  
Unnumber'd buds, an' flow'rs delicious spoils,  
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen

piles,

Are doom'd by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,  
The death o' devils smoor'd wi' brimstone reek  
The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side,  
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;  
The feather'd field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,  
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:  
(What warm, poetic heart, but inly bleeds,  
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)  
Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs;  
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,

Except, perhaps, the robin's whistling glee,  
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:  
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,  
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noontide  
blaze,  
While thick the gossamer waves wanton in the  
rays.

'Twas in that season, when a simple bard,  
Unknown and poor, simplicity's reward,  
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of Ayr,  
By whim inspired, or haply prest wi' care,  
He left his bed, and took his wayward rout,  
And down by Simpson's<sup>60</sup> wheel'd the left  
about:

(Whether impell'd by all-directing Fate,  
To witness what I after shall narrate;  
Or whether, rapt in meditation high,  
He wander'd out he knew not where nor why)  
The drowsy Dungeon-clock,<sup>61</sup> had number'd  
two,

And Wallace Tow'r had sworn the fact was true:  
The tide-swol'n Firth, with sullen sounding roar,  
Through the still night dash'd hoarse along the

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<sup>60</sup> A noted tavern at the auld Brig end.

<sup>61</sup> The two steeples.

shore.

All else was hush'd as Nature's closed e'e:  
The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:  
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,  
Crept, gently-crusting, o'er the glittering  
stream.—

When, lo! on either hand the list'ning Bard,  
The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard;  
Two dusky forms dart thro' the midnight air,  
Swift as the gos<sup>62</sup> drives on the wheeling hare;  
Ane on th' Auld Brig his airy shape uprears,  
The ither flutters o'er the rising piers:  
Our warlock Rhymer instantly descry'd  
The Sprites that owre the brigs of Ayr preside.  
(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,  
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;  
Fays, Spunkies, Kelpies, a', they can explain

them,

And ev'n the vera deils they brawly ken them.)  
Auld Brig appear'd of ancient Pictish race,  
The very wrinkles gothic in his face:  
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,  
Yet, teughly doure, he bade an unco bang.  
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat,  
That he at Lon'on, frae ane Adams got;

---

62 The gos-hawk or falcon.

In's hand five taper staves as smooth's a bead,  
Wi' virls and whirlygigums at the head.  
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,  
Spying the time-worn flaws in ev'ry arch;—  
It chanc'd his new-come neebor took his e'e,  
And e'en a vex'd and angry heart had he!  
Wi' thieveless sneer to see his modish mien,  
He, down the water, gies him this guid-e'en:—

**Auld brig .**

I doubt na', frien', ye'll think ye're nae  
sheep-shank,

Ance ye were streekit o'er frae bank to bank!  
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me,  
Tho' faith, that day I doubt ye'll never see;  
There'll be, if that date come, I'll wad a boddle,  
Some fewer whigmeleeries in your noddle.

**New brig .**

Auld Vandal, ye but show your little mense,  
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;  
Will your poor, narrow foot-path of a street,  
Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they  
meet—

Your ruin'd formless bulk o' stane en' lime,  
Compare wi' bonnie Brigs o' modern time?  
There's men o' taste wou'd tak the

Ducat-stream,<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> A noted ford, just above the Auld Brig.



Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim,  
Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the view  
Of sic an ugly, Gothic hulk as you.

**Auld brig .**

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!—  
This mony a year I've stood the flood an' tide;  
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,  
I'll be a Brig, when ye're a shapeless cairn!  
As yet ye little ken about the matter,  
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.  
When heavy, dark, continued a'-day rains,  
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;  
When from the hills where springs the brawling

Coil,

Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,  
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland

course,

Or haunted Garpal<sup>64</sup> draws his feeble source,  
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' spotting thowes,  
In mony a torrent down the snaw-broo rowes;  
While crashing ice born on the roaring speat,  
Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;

---

<sup>64</sup> The banks of Garpal Water is one of the few places in the West of Scotland, where those fancy-scaring beings, known by the name of Ghaists, still continue pertinaciously to inhabit.

And from Glenbuck,<sup>65</sup> down to the  
Ratton-key,<sup>66</sup>

Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd tumbling sea—  
Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!  
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring  
skies.

A lesson sadly teaching, to your cost,  
That Architecture's noble art is lost!

**New brig .**

Fine Architecture, trowth, I needs must say't o't!  
The L—d be thankit that we've tint the gate o't!  
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,  
Hanging with threat'ning jut like precipices;  
O'er-arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,  
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves;  
Windows and doors, in nameless sculpture drest,  
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;  
Forms like some bedlam Statuary's dream,  
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;  
Forms might be worshipp'd on the bended knee,  
And still the second dread command be free,  
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.  
Mansions that would disgrace the building taste

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<sup>65</sup> The source of the river Ayr.

<sup>66</sup> A small landing-place above the large key.

Of any mason reptile, bird or beast;  
Fit only for a doited monkish race,  
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace;  
Or cuifs of later times wha held the notion  
That sullen gloom was sterling true devotion;  
Fancies that our guid Brugh denies protection!  
And soon may they expire, unblest with  
resurrection!

**Auld brig .**

O ye, my dear-remember'd ancient yealings,  
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!  
Ye worthy Proveses, an' mony a Bailie,  
Wha in the paths o' righteousness did toil ay;  
Ye dainty Deacons and ye douce Conveeners,  
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners:  
Ye godly Councils wha hae blest this town;  
Ye godly Brethren o' the sacred gown,  
Wha meekly gie your hurdies to the smiters;  
And (what would now be strange) ye godly  
writers;

A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo,  
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do!  
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,  
To see each melancholy alteration;  
And, agonizing, curse the time and place  
When ye begat the base, degen'rate race!  
Nae langer rev'rend men, their country's glory,  
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story!

Nae langer thrifty citizens an' douce,  
Meet owre a pint, or in the council-house;  
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless gentry,  
The herryment and ruin of the country;  
Men, three parts made by tailors and by barbers,  
Wha waste your weel-hain'd gear on d—d new  
Brigs and Harbours!

**New brig .**

Now haud you there! for faith ye've said enough,  
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through;  
As for your Priesthood, I shall say but little,  
Corbies and Clergy, are a shot right kittle:  
But under favour o' your langer beard,  
Abuse o' Magistrates might weel be spar'd:  
To liken them to your auld-warld squad,  
I must needs say, comparisons are odd.  
In Ayr, wag-wits nae mair can have a handle  
To mouth 'a citizen,' a term o' scandal;  
Nae mair the Council waddles down the street,  
In all the pomp of ignorant conceit;  
Men wha grew wise priggin' owre hops an'  
raisins,  
Or gather'd lib'ral views in bonds and seisins,  
If haply Knowledge, on a random tramp,  
Had shor'd them with a glimmer of his lamp,  
And would to Common-sense for once betray'd  
them,  
Plain, dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them

What farther clishmaclaver might been said,  
What bloody wars, if Spirites had blood to shed,  
No man can tell; but all before their sight,  
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:  
Adown the glitt'ring stream they featly danc'd;  
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd:  
They footed owre the wat'ry glass so neat,  
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet:  
While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,  
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.—  
O had M'Lauchlan,<sup>67</sup> thairm-inspiring Sage,  
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,  
When thro' his dear strathspeys they bore with

highland rage;

Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,  
The lover's raptur'd joys or bleeding cares;  
How would his highland lug been nobler fir'd,  
And ev'n his matchless hand with finer touch

inspir'd!

No guess could tell what instrument appear'd,  
But all the soul of Music's self was heard,  
Harmonious concert rung in every part,  
While simple melody pour'd moving on the heart.  
The Genius of the stream in front appears,  
A venerable Chief advanc'd in years;

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<sup>67</sup> A well known performer of Scottish music on the violin.

His hoary head with water-lilies crown'd,  
His manly leg with garter tangle bound.  
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,  
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;  
Then, crown'd with flow'ry hay, came Rural Joy,  
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:  
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,  
Led yellow Autumn, wreath'd with nodding corn;  
Then Winter's time-bleach'd looks did hoary  
show,  
By Hospitality with cloudless brow.  
Next follow'd Courage, with his martial stride,  
From where the Feal wild woody coverts hide;  
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,  
A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair:  
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode  
From simple Catrine, their long-lov'd abode:  
Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazel  
wreath,  
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath  
The broken iron instruments of death;  
At sight of whom our Sprites forgot their kindling  
wrath.

**LXXII. ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT  
DUNDAS, ESQ., OF ARNISTON, LATE  
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF**

## SESSION

[At the request of Advocate Hay, Burns composed this Poem, in the hope that it might interest the powerful family of Dundas in his fortunes. I found it inserted in the handwriting of the poet, in an interleaved copy of his Poems, which he presented to Dr. Geddes, accompanied by the following surly note:—"The foregoing Poem has some tolerable lines in it, but the incurable wound of my pride will not suffer me to correct, or even peruse it. I sent a copy of it with my best prose letter to the son of the great man, the theme of the piece, by the hands of one of the noblest men in God's world, Alexander Wood, surgeon: when, behold! his solicitorship took no more notice of my Poem, or of me, than I had been a strolling fiddler who had made free with his lady's name, for a silly new reel. Did the fellow imagine that I looked for any dirty gratuity?" This Robert Dundas was the elder brother of that Lord Melville to whose hands, soon after these lines were written, all the government patronage in Scotland was confided, and who, when the name of Burns was mentioned, pushed the wine to Pitt, and said nothing. The poem was first printed by me, in 1834.]

Lone on the bleaky hills the straying flocks  
Shun the fierce storms among the sheltering  
rocks;

Down from the rivulets, red with dashing rains,  
The gathering floods burst o'er the distant plains;  
Beneath the blasts the leafless forests groan;  
The hollow caves return a sullen moan.  
Ye hills, ye plains, ye forests and ye caves,  
Ye howling winds, and wintry swelling waves!  
Unheard, unseen, by human ear or eye,  
Sad to your sympathetic scenes I fly;  
Where to the whistling blast and waters' roar  
Pale Scotia's recent wound I may deplore.  
O heavy loss, thy country ill could bear!  
A loss these evil days can ne'er repair!  
Justice, the high vicegerent of her God,  
Her doubtful balance ey'd, and sway'd her rod;  
Hearing the tidings of the fatal blow  
She sunk, abandon'd to the wildest woe.  
Wrongs, injuries, from many a darksome den,  
Now gay in hope explore the paths of men:  
See from this cavern grim Oppression rise,  
And throw on poverty his cruel eyes;  
Keen on the helpless victim see him fly,  
And stifle, dark, the feebly-bursting cry:  
Mark ruffian Violence, distain'd with crimes,  
Rousing elate in these degenerate times;  
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,  
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way:  
While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue  
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong:



Hark, injur'd Want recounts th' unlisten'd tale,  
And much-wrong'd Mis'ry pours th' unpitied  
wail!

Ye dark waste hills, and brown unsightly plains,  
To you I sing my grief-inspired strains:  
Ye tempests, rage! ye turbid torrents, roll!  
Ye suit the joyless tenor of my soul.  
Life's social haunts and pleasures I resign,  
Be nameless wilds and lonely wanderings mine,  
To mourn the woes my country must endure,  
That wound degenerate ages cannot cure.

**LXXIII. ON READING IN A NEWSPAPER  
THE DEATH OF JOHN M'LEOD, ESQ.  
BROTHER TO A YOUNG LADY, A  
PARTICULAR FRIEND OF THE AUTHOR'S**

[John M'Leod was of the ancient family of Raza, and brother to that Isabella M'Leod, for whom Burns, in his correspondence, expressed great regard. The little Poem, when first printed, consisted of six verses: I found a seventh in M'Murdo Manuscripts, the fifth in this edition, along with an intimation in prose, that the M'Leod family had endured many unmerited misfortunes. I observe that Sir Harris Nicolas has rejected this new verse, because, he says, it repeats the same sentiment as the one which precedes it. I think

differently, and have retained it.]

Sad thy tale, thou idle page,  
And rueful thy alarms:  
Death tears the brother of her love  
From Isabella's arms.  
Sweetly deck'd with pearly dew  
The morning rose may blow;  
But cold successive noontide blasts  
May lay its beauties low.  
Fair on Isabella's morn  
The sun propitious smil'd;  
But, long ere noon, succeeding clouds  
Succeeding hopes beguil'd.  
Fate oft tears the bosom chords  
That nature finest strung:  
So Isabella's heart was form'd,  
And so that heart was wrung.  
Were it in the poet's power,  
Strong as he shares the grief  
That pierces Isabella's heart,  
To give that heart relief!  
Dread Omnipotence, alone,  
Can heal the wound He gave;  
Can point the brimful grief-worn eyes  
To scenes beyond the grave.  
Virtue's blossoms there shall blow,  
And fear no withering blast;

There Isabella's spotless worth  
Shall happy be at last.

**LXXIV. TO MISS LOGAN, WITH BEATTIE'S  
POEMS FOR A NEW YEAR'S GIFT. JAN. 1,  
1787**

[Burns was fond of writing compliments in books, and giving them in presents among his fair friends. Miss Logan, of Park house, was sister to Major Logan, of Camlarg, and the "sentimental sister Susie," of the Epistle to her brother. Both these names were early dropped out of the poet's correspondence.]

Again the silent wheels of time  
Their annual round have driv'n,  
And you, tho' scarce in maiden prime,  
Are so much nearer Heav'n.  
No gifts have I from Indian coasts  
The infant year to hail:  
I send you more than India boasts  
In Edwin's simple tale.  
Our sex with guile and faithless love  
Is charg'd, perhaps, too true;  
But may, dear maid, each lover prove  
An Edwin still to you!

## LXXV. THE AMERICAN WAR. A FRAGMENT

[Dr. Blair said that the politics of Burns smelt of the smithy, which, interpreted, means, that they were unstatesman-like, and worthy of a country ale-house, and an audience of peasants. The Poem gives us a striking picture of the humorous and familiar way in which the hinds and husbandmen of Scotland handle national topics: the smithy is a favourite resort, during the winter evenings, of rustic politicians; and national affairs and parish scandal are alike discussed. Burns was in those days, and some time after, a vehement Tory: his admiration of "Chatham's Boy," called down on him the dusty indignation of the republican Ritson.]

### I.

When Guildford good our pilot stood,  
And did our hellim thraw, man,  
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,  
Within America, man:  
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,  
And in the sea did jaw, man;  
An' did nae less in full Congress,  
Than quite refuse our law, man.

### II.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery takes,

I wat he was na slaw, man;  
Down Lowrie's burn he took a turn,  
And Carleton did ca', man;  
But yet, what-reck, he, at Quebec,  
Montgomery-like did fa', man,  
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,  
Amang his en'mies a', man.

### III.

Poor Tammy Gage, within a cage,  
Was kept at Boston ha', man;  
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe  
For Philadelphia, man;  
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin  
Guid Christian blood to draw, man:  
But at New York, wi' knife an' fork,  
Sir-loin he hacked sma', man.

### IV.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,  
Till Fraser brave did fa', man,  
Then lost his way, ae misty day,  
In Saratoga shaw, man.  
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,  
An' did the buckskins claw, man;  
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,  
He hung it to the wa', man.

### V.

Then Montague, an' Guilford, too,  
Began to fear a fa', man;

And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure,  
The German Chief to thraw, man;  
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,  
Nae mercy had at a', man;  
An' Charlie Fox threw by the box,  
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

VI.

Then Rockingham took up the game,  
Till death did on him ca', man;  
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,  
Conform to gospel law, man;  
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,  
They did his measures thraw, man,  
For North an' Fox united stocks,  
An' bore him to the wa', man.

VII.

Then clubs an' hearts were Charlie's cartes,  
He swept the stakes awa', man,  
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,  
Led him a sair faux pas, man;  
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,  
On Chatham's boy did ca', man;  
An' Scotland drew her pipe, an' blew,  
"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"

VIII.

Behind the throne then Grenville's gone,  
A secret word or twa, man;  
While slee Dundas arous'd the class,

Be-north the Roman wa', man:  
An' Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith,  
(Inspired Bardies saw, man)  
Wi' kindling eyes cry'd "Willie, rise!  
Would I hae fear'd them a', man?"

IX.

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.,  
Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man,  
Till Suthron raise, and coost their claise  
Behind him in a raw, man;  
An' Caledon threw by the drone,  
An' did her whittle draw, man;  
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt an' blood  
To make it guid in law, man.

## LXXVI. THE DEAN OF FACULTY. A NEW BALLAD

[The Hal and Bob of these satiric lines were Henry Erskine, and Robert Dundas: and their contention was, as the verses intimate, for the place of Dean of the Faculty of Advocates: Erskine was successful. It is supposed that in characterizing Dundas, the poet remembered "the incurable wound which his pride had got" in the affair of the elegiac verses on the death of the elder Dundas. The poem first appeared in the Reliques of Burns.]

I.

Dire was the hate at old Harlaw,  
That Scot to Scot did carry;  
And dire the discord Langside saw,  
For beauteous, hapless Mary:  
But Scot with Scot ne'er met so hot,  
Or were more in fury seen, Sir,  
Than 'twixt Hal and Bob for the famous job—  
Who should be Faculty's Dean, Sir.—

II.

This Hal for genius, wit, and lore,  
Among the first was number'd;  
But pious Bob, 'mid learning's store,  
Commandment tenth remember'd.—  
Yet simple Bob the victory got,  
And won his heart's desire;  
Which shows that heaven can boil the pot,  
Though the devil p—s in the fire.—

III.

Squire Hal besides had in this case  
Pretensions rather brassy,  
For talents to deserve a place  
Are qualifications saucy;  
So, their worships of the Faculty,  
Quite sick of merit's rudeness,  
Chose one who should owe it all, d'ye see,  
To their gratis grace and goodness.—



#### IV.

As once on Pisgah purg'd was the sight  
Of a son of Circumcision,  
So may be, on this Pisgah height,  
Bob's purblind, mental vision:  
Nay, Bobby's mouth may be open'd yet  
Till for eloquence you hail him,  
And swear he has the angel met  
That met the Ass of Balaam.

### LXXVII. TO A LADY, WITH A PRESENT OF A PAIR OF DRINKING-GLASSES

[To Mrs. M'Lehose, of Edinburgh, the poet presented the drinking-glasses alluded to in the verses: they are, it seems, still preserved, and the lady on occasions of high festival, indulges, it is said, favourite visitors with a draught from them of "The blood of Shiraz' scorched vine."]

Fair Empress of the Poet's soul,  
And Queen of Poetesses;  
Clarinda, take this little boon,  
This humble pair of glasses.  
And fill them high with generous juice,  
As generous as your mind;  
And pledge me in the generous toast—

“The whole of human kind!”  
“To those who love us!”—second fill;  
But not to those whom we love;  
Lest we love those who love not us!—  
A third—“to thee and me, love!”

## LXXVIII. TO CLARINDA

[This is the lady of the drinking-glasses; the Mrs. Mac of many a toast among the poet's acquaintances. She was, in those days, young and beautiful, and we fear a little giddy, since she indulged in that sentimental and platonic flirtation with the poet, contained in the well-known letters to Clarinda. The letters, after the poet's death, appeared in print without her permission: she obtained an injunction against the publication, which still remains in force, but her anger seems to have been less a matter of taste than of whim, for the injunction has been allowed to slumber in the case of some editors, though it has been enforced against others.]

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,  
The measur'd time is run!  
The wretch beneath the dreary pole  
So marks his latest sun.  
To what dark cave of frozen night

Shall poor Sylvander hie;  
Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,  
The sun of all his joy.  
We part—but, by these precious drops  
That fill thy lovely eyes!  
No other light shall guide my steps  
Till thy bright beams arise.  
She, the fair sun of all her sex,  
Has blest my glorious day;  
And shall a glimmering planet fix  
My worship to its ray?

**LXXIX. VERSES WRITTEN UNDER THE  
PORTRAIT OF FERGUSSON, THE POET, IN  
A COPY OF THAT AUTHOR'S WORKS  
PRESENTED TO A YOUNG LADY**

[Who the young lady was to whom the poet presented the portrait and Poems of the ill-fated Fergusson, we have not been told. The verses are dated Edinburgh, March 19th, 1787.]

Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleas'd,  
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure!  
O thou my elder brother in misfortune,  
By far my elder brother in the muses,  
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!

Why is the bard unpitied by the world,  
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?

**LXXX. PROLOGUE SPOKEN BY MR.  
WOODS ON HIS BENEFIT NIGHT,  
MONDAY, 16 April, 1787.**

[The Woods for whom this Prologue was written, was in those days a popular actor in Edinburgh. He had other claims on Burns: he had been the friend as well as comrade of poor Fergusson, and possessed some poetical talent. He died in Edinburgh, December 14th, 1802.]

When by a generous Public's kind acclaim,  
That dearest meed is granted—honest fame;  
When here your favour is the actor's lot,  
Nor even the man in private life forgot;  
What breast so dead to heavenly virtue's glow,  
But heaves impassion'd with the grateful throe?  
Poor is the task to please a barbarous throng,  
It needs no Siddons' powers in Southerne's song;  
But here an ancient nation fam'd afar,  
For genius, learning high, as great in war—  
Hail, Caledonia, name for ever dear!  
Before whose sons I'm honoured to appear!  
Where every science—every nobler art—

That can inform the mind, or mend the heart,  
Is known; as grateful nations oft have found  
Far as the rude barbarian marks the bound.  
Philosophy, no idle pedant dream,  
Here holds her search by heaven-taught Reason's  
beam;

Here History paints, with elegance and force,  
The tide of Empires' fluctuating course;  
Here Douglas forms wild Shakspeare into plan,  
And Harley<sup>68</sup> rouses all the god in man.  
When well-form'd taste and sparkling wit unite,  
With manly lore, or female beauty bright,  
(Beauty, where faultless symmetry and grace,  
Can only charm as in the second place,)  
Witness my heart, how oft with panting fear,  
As on this night, I've met these judges here!  
But still the hope Experience taught to live,  
Equal to judge—you're candid to forgive.  
Nor hundred-headed Riot here we meet,  
With decency and law beneath his feet:  
Nor Insolence assumes fair Freedom's name;  
Like Caledonians, you applaud or blame.  
O Thou dread Power! whose Empire-giving hand  
Has oft been stretch'd to shield the honour'd  
land!

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68 The Man of Feeling, by Mackenzie.

Strong may she glow with all her ancient fire:  
May every son be worthy of his sire;  
Firm may she rise with generous disdain  
At Tyranny's, or direr Pleasure's chain;  
Still self-dependent in her native shore,  
Bold may she brave grim Danger's loudest roar,  
Till Fate the curtain drop on worlds to be no  
more.

## LXXXI. SKETCH

[This Sketch is a portion of a long Poem which Burns proposed to call "The Poet's Progress." He communicated the little he had done, for he was a courter of opinions, to Dugald Stewart. "The Fragment forms," said he, "the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you, merely as a sample of my hand at portrait-sketching." It is probable that the professor's response was not favourable for we hear no more of the Poem.]

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping wight,  
And still his precious self his dear delight;  
Who loves his own smart shadow in the streets  
Better than e'er the fairest she he meets:

A man of fashion, too, he made his tour,  
Learn'd vive la bagatelle, et vive l'amour:  
So travell'd monkeys their grimace improve,  
Polish their grin, nay, sigh for ladies' love.  
Much specious lore, but little understood;  
Veneering oft outshines the solid wood:  
His solid sense—by inches you must tell.  
But mete his cunning by the old Scots ell;  
His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,  
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.

## LXXXII. TO MRS. SCOTT, OF WAUCHOPE

[The lady to whom this epistle is addressed was a painter and a poetess: her pencil sketches are said to have been beautiful; and she had a ready skill in rhyme, as the verses addressed to Burns fully testify. Taste and poetry belonged to her family; she was the niece of Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of a beautiful variation of *The Flowers of the Forest*.]

I mind it weel in early date,  
When I was beardless, young and blate,  
An' first could thresh the barn;  
Or hand a yokin at the pleugh;  
An' tho' forfoughten sair enough,  
Yet unco proud to learn:

When first among the yellow corn  
A man I reckon'd was,  
An' wi' the lave ilk merry morn  
Could rank my rig and lass,  
Still shearing, and clearing,  
The tither stoked raw,  
Wi' claivers, an' haivers,  
Wearing the day awa.  
E'en then, a wish, I mind its pow'r,  
A wish that to my latest hour  
Shall strongly heave my breast,  
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake  
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,  
Or sing a sang at least.  
The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide  
Among the bearded bear,  
I turn'd the weeder-clips aside,  
An' spar'd the symbol dear:  
No nation, no station,  
My envy e'er could raise,  
A Scot still, but blot still,  
I knew nae higher praise.  
But still the elements o' sang  
In formless jumble, right an' wrang,  
Wild floated in my brain;  
'Till on that har'st I said before,  
My partner in the merry core,  
She rous'd the forming strain:



I see her yet, the sonsie quean,  
That lighted up her jingle,  
Her witching smile, her pauky een  
That gart my heart-strings tingle:  
I fired, inspired,  
At every kindling keek,  
But bashing and dashing  
I feared aye to speak.  
Health to the sex, ilk guid chiel says,  
Wi' merry dance in winter days,  
An' we to share in common:  
The gust o' joy, the balm of woe,  
The saul o' life, the heaven below,  
Is rapture-giving woman.  
Ye surly sumphs, who hate the name,  
Be mindfu' o' your mither:  
She, honest woman, may think shame  
That ye're connected with her.  
Ye're wae men, ye're nae men  
That slight the lovely dears;  
To shame ye, disclaim ye,  
Ilk honest birkie swears.  
For you, no bred to barn and byre,  
Wha sweetly tune the Scottish lyre,  
Thanks to you for your line:  
The marled plaid ye kindly spare,  
By me should gratefully be ware;  
'Twad please me to the nine.

I'd be mair vauntie o' my hap,  
Douce hingin' owre my curple  
Than ony ermine ever lap,  
Or proud imperial purple.  
Fareweel then, lang heel then,  
An' plenty be your fa';  
May losses and crosses  
Ne'er at your hallan ca'.

### **LXXXIII. EPISTLE TO WILLIAM CREECH**

[A storm of rain detained Burns one day, during his border tour, at Selkirk, and he employed his time in writing this characteristic epistle to Creech, his bookseller. Creech was a person of education and taste; he was not only the most popular publisher in the north, but he was intimate with almost all the distinguished men who, in those days, adorned Scottish literature. But though a joyous man, a lover of sociality, and the keeper of a good table, he was close and parsimonious, and loved to hold money to the last moment that the law allowed.]

*Selkirk, 13 May, 1787.*

Auld chukie Reekie's<sup>69</sup> sair distrest,  
Down droops her ance weel-burnisht crest,  
Nae joy her bonnie buskit nest  
Can yield ava,  
Her darling bird that she lo'es best,  
Willie's awa!

O Willie was a witty wight,  
And had o' things an unco slight;  
Auld Reekie ay he keepit tight,  
An' trig an' braw:

But now they'll busk her like a fright,  
Willie's awa!

The stiffest o' them a' he bow'd;  
The bauldest o' them a' he cow'd;  
They durst nae mair than he allow'd,  
That was a law;

We've lost a birkie weel worth gowd,  
Willie's awa!

Now gawkies, tawpies, gowks, and fools,  
Frae colleges and boarding-schools,  
May sprout like simmer puddock stools  
In glen or shaw;  
He wha could brush them down to mools,  
Willie's awa!

The brethren o' the Commerce-Chaumer<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Edinburgh.

May mourn their loss wi' doofu' clamour;  
He was a dictionar and grammar  
Amang them a';  
I fear they'll now mak mony a stammer,  
Willie's awa!  
Nae mair we see his levee door  
Philosophers and poets pour,<sup>71</sup>  
And toothy critics by the score  
In bloody raw!  
The adjutant o' a' the core,  
Willie's awa!  
Now worthy Gregory's Latin face,  
Tytler's and Greenfield's modest grace;  
Mackenzie, Stewart, sic a brace  
As Rome n'er saw;  
They a' maun meet some ither place,  
Willie's awa!  
Poor Burns—e'en Scotch drink canna quicken,  
He cheeps like some bewilder'd chicken,  
Scar'd frae its minnie and the cleckin  
By hoodie-craw;

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<sup>70</sup> The Chamber of Commerce in Edinburgh, of which Creech was Secretary.

<sup>71</sup> Many literary gentlemen were accustomed to meet at Mr. Creech's house at breakfast.

Grief's gien his heart an unco kickin',  
Willie's awa!

Now ev'ry sour-mou'd girnin' blellum,  
And Calvin's fock are fit to fell him;  
And self-conceited critic skellum  
His quill may draw;  
He wha could brawlie ward their bellum,  
Willie's awa!

Up wimpling stately Tweed I've sped,  
And Eden scenes on crystal Jed,  
And Ettrick banks now roaring red,  
While tempests blaw;  
But every joy and pleasure's fled,  
Willie's awa!

May I be slander's common speech;  
A text for infamy to preach;  
And lastly, streekit out to bleach  
In winter snaw;  
When I forget thee! Willie Creech,  
Tho' far awa!

May never wicked fortune touzle him!  
May never wicked man bamboozle him!  
Until a pow as auld's Methusalem  
He canty claw!  
Then to the blessed New Jerusalem,  
Fleet wing awa!

## LXXXIV. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE

[The Falls of Bruar in Athole are exceedingly beautiful and picturesque; and their effect, when Burns visited them, was much impaired by want of shrubs and trees. This was in 1787: the poet, accompanied by his future biographer, Professor Walker, went, when close on twilight, to this romantic scene: “he threw himself,” said the Professor, “on a heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. In a few days I received a letter from Inverness, for the poet had gone on his way, with the Petition enclosed.” His Grace of Athole obeyed the injunction: the picturesque points are now crowned with thriving woods, and the beauty of the Falls is much increased.]

I.

My Lord, I know your noble ear  
Woe ne'er assails in vain;  
Embolden'd thus, I beg you'll hear  
Your humble slave complain,  
How saucy Phœbus' scorching beams  
In flaming summer-pride,  
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,  
And drink my crystal tide.

II.

The lightly-jumpin' glowrin' trouts,  
That thro' my waters play,  
If, in their random, wanton spouts,  
They near the margin stray;  
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,  
I'm scorching up so shallow,  
They're left the whitening stanes amang,  
In gasping death to wallow.

III.

Last day I grat wi' spite and teen,  
As Poet Burns came by,  
That to a bard I should be seen  
Wi' half my channel dry:  
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,  
Even as I was he shor'd me;  
But had I in my glory been,  
He, kneeling, wad ador'd me.

IV.

Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,  
In twisting strength I rin;  
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,  
Wild-roaring o'er a linn:  
Enjoying large each spring and well,  
As Nature gave them me,  
I am, altho' I say't mysel',  
Worth gaun a mile to see.

V.

Would then my noble master please  
To grant my highest wishes,  
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees,  
And bonnie spreading bushes.  
Delighted doubly then, my Lord,  
You'll wander on my banks,  
And listen mony a grateful bird  
Return you tuneful thanks.

VI.

The sober laverock, warbling wild,  
Shall to the skies aspire;  
The gowdspink, music's gayest child,  
Shall sweetly join the choir:  
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear,  
The mavis mild and mellow;  
The robin pensive autumn cheer,  
In all her locks of yellow.

VII.

This, too, a covert shall insure  
To shield them from the storm;  
And coward maukin sleep secure,  
Low in her grassy form:  
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,  
To weave his crown of flow'rs;  
Or find a shelt'ring safe retreat  
From prone-descending show'rs.

VIII.

And here, by sweet, endearing stealth,



Shall meet the loving pair,  
Despising worlds with all their wealth  
As empty idle care.  
The flow'rs shall vie in all their charms  
The hour of heav'n to grace,  
And birks extend their fragrant arms  
To screen the dear embrace.

IX.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,  
Some musing bard may stray,  
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,  
And misty mountain gray;  
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,  
Mild-chequering thro' the trees,  
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,  
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.

X.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,  
My lowly banks o'erspread,  
And view, deep-bending in the pool,  
Their shadows' wat'ry bed!  
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest  
My craggy cliffs adorn;  
And, for the little songster's nest,  
The close embow'ring thorn.

XI.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,  
Your little angel band,

Spring, like their fathers, up to prop  
Their honour'd native land!  
So may thro' Albion's farthest ken,  
To social-flowing glasses,  
The grace be—"Athole's honest men,  
And Athole's bonnie lasses?"

## LXXXV. ON SCARING SOME WATER-FOWL IN LOCH-TURIT

[When Burns wrote these touching lines, he was staying with Sir William Murray, of Ochtertyre, during one of his Highland tours. Loch-Turit is a wild lake among the recesses of the hills, and was welcome from its loneliness to the heart of the poet.]

Why, ye tenants of the lake,  
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake?  
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why  
At my presence thus you fly?  
Why disturb your social joys,  
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—  
Common friend to you and me,  
Nature's gifts to all are free:  
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,  
Busy feed, or wanton lave:  
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,

Bide the surging billow's shock.  
Conscious, blushing for our race,  
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.  
Man, your proud usurping foe,  
Would be lord of all below:  
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,  
Tyrant stern to all beside.  
The eagle, from the cliffy brow,  
Marking you his prey below,  
In his breast no pity dwells,  
Strong necessity compels:  
But man, to whom alone is giv'n  
A ray direct from pitying heav'n,  
Glories in his heart humane—  
And creatures for his pleasure slain.  
In these savage, liquid plains,  
Only known to wand'ring swains,  
Where the mossy riv'let strays,  
Far from human haunts and ways;  
All on Nature you depend,  
And life's poor season peaceful spend.  
Or, if man's superior might  
Dare invade your native right,  
On the lofty ether borne,  
Man with all his pow'rs you scorn;  
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,  
Other lakes and other springs;  
And the foe you cannot brave,

Scorn at least to be his slave.

**LXXXVI. WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL, OVER  
THE CHIMNEY-PIECE, IN THE PARLOUR  
OF THE INN AT KENMORE, TAYMOUTH.**

[The castle of Taymouth is the residence of the Earl of Breadalbane: it is a magnificent structure, contains many fine paintings: has some splendid old trees and romantic scenery.]

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,  
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;  
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,  
Th' abodes of covey'd grouse and timid sheep,  
My savage journey, curious I pursue,  
'Till fam'd Breadalbane opens to my view.—  
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,  
The woods, wild scatter'd, clothe their ample  
sides;  
Th' outstretching lake, embosom'd 'mong the  
hills,  
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;  
The Tay, meand'ring sweet in infant pride,  
The palace, rising on its verdant side;  
The lawns, wood-fring'd in Nature's native taste;  
The hillocks, dropt in Nature's careless haste;

The arches, striding o'er the new-born stream;  
The village, glittering in the noontide beam—  
Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,  
Lone wand'ring by the hermit's mossy cell:  
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;  
Th' incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—  
Here Poesy might wake her heav'n-taught lyre,  
And look through Nature with creative fire;  
Here, to the wrongs of fate half reconcil'd,  
Misfortune's lighten'd steps might wander wild;  
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,  
Find balm to soothe her bitter—rankling wounds:  
Here heart-struck Grief might heav'nward stretch  
her scan,  
And injur'd Worth forget and pardon man.

### **LXXXVII. WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL, STANDING BY THE FALL OF FYERS, NEAR LOCH-NESS**

[This is one of the many fine scenes, in the Celtic Parnassus of Ossian: but when Burns saw it, the Highland passion of the stream was abated, for there had been no rain for some time to swell and send it pouring down its precipices in a way worthy of the scene. The descent of the water is about two hundred feet. There is another fall further up the stream, very

wild and savage, on which the Fyers makes three prodigious leaps into a deep gulf where nothing can be seen for the whirling foam and agitated mist.]

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods  
The roaring Fyers pours his mossy floods;  
Till full he dashes on the rocky mounds,  
Where, thro' a shapeless breach, his stream  
resounds,  
As high in air the bursting torrents flow,  
As deep-recoiling surges foam below,  
Prone down the rock the whitening sheet  
descends,  
And viewless Echo's ear, astonish'd, rends.  
Dim seen, through rising mists and ceaseless  
show'rs,  
The hoary cavern, wide surrounding, low'rs.  
Still thro' the gap the struggling river toils,  
And still below, the horrid cauldron boils—

## **LXXXVIII. POETICAL ADDRESS TO MR. W. TYTLER, WITH THE PRESENT OF THE BARD'S PICTURE**

[When these verses were written there was much stately Jacobitism about Edinburgh, and it is likely that Tytler, who laboured to dispel the cloud of calumny

which hung over the memory of Queen Mary, had a bearing that way. Taste and talent have now descended in the Tytlers through three generations: an uncommon event in families. The present edition of the Poem has been completed from the original in the poet's handwriting.]

Revered defender of beauteous Stuart,  
Of Stuart, a name once respected,  
A name, which to love, was once mark of a true  
heart,  
But now 'tis despis'd and neglected.  
Tho' something like moisture conglobes in my  
eye,  
Let no one misdeem me disloyal;  
A poor friendless wand'rer may well claim a sigh,  
Still more, if that wand'rer were royal.  
My fathers that name have rever'd on a throne,  
My fathers have fallen to right it;  
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,  
That name should he scoffingly slight it.  
Still in prayers for King George I most heartily  
join,  
The Queen and the rest of the gentry,  
Be they wise, be they foolish, is nothing of mine;  
Their title's avow'd by my country.  
But why of that epocha make such a fuss,  
That gave us th' Electoral stem?

If bringing them over was lucky for us,  
I'm sure 'twas as lucky for them.  
But loyalty truce! we're on dangerous ground,  
Who knows how the fashions may alter?  
The doctrine, to-day, that is loyalty sound,  
To-morrow may bring us a halter.  
I send you a trifle, the head of a bard,  
A trifle scarce worthy your care;  
But accept it, good Sir, as a mark of regard,  
Sincere as a saint's dying prayer.  
Now life's chilly evening dim shades on your  
eye,  
And ushers the long dreary night;  
But you, like the star that athwart gilds the sky,  
Your course to the latest is bright.

**LXXXIX. WRITTEN IN FRIARS-CARSE  
HERMITAGE, ON THE BANKS OF NITH.  
JUNE. 1788**

[FIRST COPY]

[The interleaved volume presented by Burns to Dr. Geddes, has enabled me to present the reader with the rough draught of this truly beautiful Poem, the first-fruits perhaps of his intercourse with the muses of Nithside.]



Thou whom chance may hither lead,  
Be thou clad in russet weed,  
Be thou deck'd in silken stole,  
Grave these maxims on thy soul.  
Life is but a day at most,  
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;  
Day, how rapid in its flight—  
Day, how few must see the night;  
Hope not sunshine every hour,  
Fear not clouds will always lower.  
Happiness is but a name,  
Make content and ease thy aim.  
Ambition is a meteor gleam;  
Fame, a restless idle dream:  
Pleasures, insects on the wing  
Round Peace, the tenderest flower of Spring;  
Those that sip the dew alone,  
Make the butterflies thy own;  
Those that would the bloom devour,  
Crush the locusts—save the flower.  
For the future be prepar'd,  
Guard wherever thou canst guard;  
But, thy utmost duly done,  
Welcome what thou canst not shun.  
Follies past, give thou to air,  
Make their consequence thy care:  
Keep the name of man in mind,  
And dishonour not thy kind.

Reverence with lowly heart  
Him whose wondrous work thou art;  
Keep His goodness still in view,  
Thy trust—and thy example, too.  
Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!  
Quod the Beadsman on Nithside.

**XC. WRITTEN IN FRIARS-CARSE  
HERMITAGE, ON NITHSIDE. DECEMBER,  
1788**



[Of this Poem Burns thought so well that he gave away many copies in his own handwriting: I have seen three. When corrected to his mind, and the manuscripts showed many changes and corrections, he published it in the new edition of his Poems as it stands in this second copy. The little Hermitage where these lines were written, stood in a lonely plantation belonging to the estate of Friars-Carse, and close to the march-dyke

of Ellisland; a small door in the fence, of which the poet had the key, admitted him at pleasure, and there he found seclusion such as he liked, with flowers and shrubs all around him. The first twelve lines of the Poem were engraved neatly on one of the window-panes, by the diamond pencil of the Bard. On Riddel's death, the Hermitage was allowed to go quietly to decay: I remember in 1803 turning two outlyer stots out of the interior.]

Thou whom chance may hither lead,  
Be thou clad in russet weed,  
Be thou deck'd in silken stole,  
Grave these counsels on thy soul.  
Life is but a day at most,  
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;  
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour.  
Fear not clouds will always lour.  
As Youth and Love with sprightly dance  
Beneath thy morning star advance,  
Pleasure with her siren air  
May delude the thoughtless pair:  
Let Prudence bless enjoyment's cup,  
Then raptur'd sip, and sip it up.  
As thy day grows warm and high,  
Life's meridian flaming nigh,  
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?  
Life's proud summits would'st thou scale?

Check thy climbing step, elate,  
Evils lurk in felon wait:  
Dangers, eagle-pinion'd, bold,  
Soar around each cliffy hold,  
While cheerful peace, with linnet song,  
Chants the lowly dells among.  
As the shades of ev'ning close,  
Beck'ning thee to long repose;  
As life itself becomes disease,  
Seek the chimney-nook of ease.  
There ruminate, with sober thought,  
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;  
And teach the sportive youngers round,  
Saws of experience, sage and sound.  
Say, man's true genuine estimate,  
The grand criterion of his fate,  
Is not—Art thou high or low?  
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?  
Wast thou cottager or king?  
Peer or peasant?—no such thing!  
Did many talents gild thy span?  
Or frugal nature grudge thee one?  
Tell them, and press it on their mind,  
As thou thyself must shortly find,  
The smile or frown of awful Heav'n,  
To virtue or to vice is giv'n.  
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,  
There solid self-enjoyment lies;

That foolish, selfish, faithless ways  
Lead to the wretched, vile, and base.  
Thus, resign'd and quiet, creep  
To the bed of lasting sleep;  
Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,  
Night, where dawn shall never break,  
Till future life, future no more,  
To light and joy the good restore,  
To light and joy unknown before.  
Stranger, go! Hea'vn be thy guide!  
Quod the beadsman of Nithside.

### **XCI. TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL, OF GLENRIDDEL. EXTEMPORE LINES ON RETURNING A NEWSPAPER**

[Captain Riddel, the Laird of Friars-Carse, was Burns's neighbour, at Ellisland: he was a kind, hospitable man, and a good antiquary. The "News and Review" which he sent to the poet contained, I have heard, some sharp strictures on his works: Burns, with his usual strong sense, set the proper value upon all contemporary criticism; genius, he knew, had nothing to fear from the folly or the malice of all such nameless "chippers and hewers." He demanded trial by his peers, and where were such to be found?]

*Ellisland, Monday Evening.*

Your news and review, Sir, I've read through and through, Sir,

With little admiring or blaming;

The papers are barren of home-news or foreign,  
No murders or rapes worth the naming.

Our friends, the reviewers, those chippers and hewers,

Are judges of mortar and stone, Sir,

But of meet or unmeet in a fabric complete,  
I'll boldly pronounce they are none, Sir.

My goose-quill too rude is to tell all your goodness

Bestow'd on your servant, the Poet;

Would to God I had one like a beam of the sun,  
And then all the world, Sir, should know it!

## **XCII. A MOTHER'S LAMENT FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON**

[“The Mother’s Lament,” says the poet, in a copy of the verses now before me, “was composed partly with a view to Mrs. Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and partly to the worthy patroness of my early unknown muse, Mrs. Stewart, of Afton.”]

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped,

And pierc'd my darling's heart;  
And with him all the joys are fled  
Life can to me impart.  
By cruel hands the sapling drops,  
In dust dishonour'd laid:  
So fell the pride of all my hopes,  
My age's future shade.  
The mother-linnet in the brake  
Bewails her ravish'd young;  
So I, for my lost darling's sake,  
Lament the live day long.  
Death, oft I've fear'd thy fatal blow,  
Now, fond I bare my breast,  
O, do thou kindly lay me low  
With him I love, at rest!

### **XCIII. FIRST EPISTLE TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRAY**

[In his manuscript copy of this Epistle the poet says "accompanying a request." What the request was the letter which enclosed it relates. Graham was one of the leading men of the Excise in Scotland, and had promised Burns a situation as exciseman: for this the poet had qualified himself; and as he began to dread that farming would be unprofitable, he wrote to remind his patron of his promise, and requested to be appointed



to a division in his own neighbourhood. He was appointed in due time: his division was extensive, and included ten parishes.]

When Nature her great master-piece designed,  
And fram'd her last, best work, the human mind,  
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,  
She form'd of various parts the various man.  
Then first she calls the useful many forth;  
Plain plodding industry, and sober worth:  
Thence peasants, farmers, native sons of earth,  
And merchandise' whole genus take their birth:  
Each prudent cit a warm existence finds,  
And all mechanics' many-apron'd kinds.  
Some other rarer sorts are wanted yet,  
The lead and buoy are needful to the net;  
The caput mortuum of gross desires  
Makes a material for mere knights and squires;  
The martial phosphorus is taught to flow,  
She kneads the lumpish philosophic dough,  
Then marks th' unyielding mass with grave  
designs,  
Law, physic, politics, and deep divines:  
Last, she sublimes th' Aurora of the poles,  
The flashing elements of female souls.  
The order'd system fair before her stood,  
Nature, well pleas'd, pronounc'd it very good;  
But ere she gave creating labour o'er,

Half-jest, she tried one curious labour more.  
Some spumy, fiery, ignis fatuus matter,  
Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter;  
With arch alacrity and conscious glee  
(Nature may have her whim as well as we,  
Her Hogarth-art perhaps she meant to show it)  
She forms the thing, and christens it—a Poet.  
Creature, tho' oft the prey of care and sorrow,  
When blest to-day, unmindful of to-morrow.  
A being form'd t' amuse his graver friends,  
Admir'd and prais'd—and there the homage

ends:

A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,  
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;  
Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,  
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;  
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,  
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.  
But honest Nature is not quite a Turk,  
She laugh'd at first, then felt for her poor work.  
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,  
She cast about a standard tree to find;  
And, to support his helpless woodbine state,  
Attach'd him to the generous truly great,  
A title, and the only one I claim,  
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous

Graham.

Pity the tuneful muses' hapless train,

Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main!  
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,  
That never gives—tho' humbly takes enough;  
The little fate allows, they share as soon,  
Unlike sage proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung

boon.

The world were blest did bliss on them depend,  
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"  
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son  
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,  
Who feel by reason and who give by rule,  
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!)  
Who make poor will do wait upon I should—  
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're

good?

Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye!  
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy!  
But come ye who the godlike pleasure know,  
Heaven's attribute distinguished—to bestow!  
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race:  
Come thou who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;  
Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!  
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.  
Why shrinks my soul half blushing, half afraid,  
Backward, abash'd to ask thy friendly aid?  
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,  
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;  
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—

Heavens! should the branded character be mine!  
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely  
flows,

Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.  
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit  
Soars on the spurning wing of injur'd merit!  
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;  
Pity the best of words should be but wind!  
So to heaven's gates the lark's shrill song

ascends,

But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.  
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,  
They dun benevolence with shameless front;  
Oblige them, patronize their tinsel lays,  
They persecute you all your future days!  
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,  
My horny fist assume the plough again;  
The pie-bald jacket let me patch once more;  
On eighteen-pence a week I've liv'd before.  
Tho', thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift!  
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:  
That, plac'd by thee upon the wish'd-for height,  
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,  
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer

flight.

#### **XCIV. ON THE DEATH OF SIR JAMES**