

The Poetry of Robert Burns 1759-1796



Afton Water

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
 Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove, whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
 Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
 Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear,
 I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
 Far mark'd with the courses of clear winding rills;
 There daily I wander as noon rises high,
 My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
 Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
 There oft, as mild Ev'ning sweeps over the lea,
 The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
 And winds by the cot where my Mary resides,
 How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
 As gathering sweet flowrets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
 Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;

My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Address to the Devil

O Prince, O chief of many throned pow'rs!
That led th' embattled seraphim to war!
(*Milton, Paradise Lost*)

O thou! whatever title suit thee,—
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie!
Wha in yon cavern, grim an' sootie,
Clos'd 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 ken'd 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 roarin lion,
For prey a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin' the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my rev'rend graunie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or whare auld ruin'd castles gray
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my graunie summon
 To say her pray'rs, douce honest woman!
 Aft yont the dike she's heard you bummin,
 Wi' eerie drone;
 Or, rustlin thro' the boortrees comin,
 Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
 The stars shot down wi' sklentin light,
 Wi' you mysel I gat a fright,
 Ayont the lough;
 Ye like a rash-buss stood in sight,
 Wi' waving sugh.

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 ragweed nags
 They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags
 Wi' wicked speed;
 And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
 Owre howket dead.

Thence, countra wives wi' toil an' pain
 May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain;
 For oh! the yellow treasure's taen
 By witchin skill;
 An' daws, twal-pint hawkie's gaen
 As yell's the bill.

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

And 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 brither ye wad whip
 Aff straught to hell!

Lang syne, in Eden'd 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 swaird,
 In shady bow'r;

Then you, ye auld snick-drawin dog!
 Ye cam to Paradise incog,
 And play'd on man a cursed brogue,
 (Black be your fa'!)
 An gied the infant warld a shog,
 Maist ruin'd a'.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
 Wi' reeket duds an reestet gizz,
 Ye did present your smoutie phiz
 Mang better folk,
 An' sklented on the man of Uz
 Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
 An' brak him out o' house and hal',
 While scabs and blotches did him gall,
 Wi' bitter claw,

An' lows'd his ill-tongued, wicked scaul,
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 you weel, 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!

Ae Fond Kiss

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, and then forever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her;
Love but her, and love forever.
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted—
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
 Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
 Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
 Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
 Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
 Ae fareweel, alas, forever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

To a Mouse

*On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough,
 November, 1785*

WEE, sleekit, cowrin, 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' murdering *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,
 An' 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 win's* ensuing,
 Baith snell an' 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 and stibble,
 Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
 Now thou's turned 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 agley,
 An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
 For promis'd joy!

Still thou are blest, compared wi' me!
 The *present* only toucheth thee:
 But Och! I *backward* cast my e'e,
 On prospects drear!
 An' *forward*, tho' I cannot see,
 I *guess* an' *fear*!
 Robert Burns

A Red, Red Rose

O my Luv'e's like a red, red rose,
 That's newly sprung in June;
 O my Luv'e's like the melodie
 That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair are thou, my bonie lass,
 So deep in luv'e am I;
 And I will luv'e thee still, my Dear,
 Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
 I will luv'e thee still, my dear,

While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
 And fare thee weel, a while!
 And I will come again, my Luve,
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

John Anderson my Jo

JOHN Anderson my jo, John,
 When we were first acquent;
 Your locks were like the raven,
 Your bony brow was brent;
 But now your brow is beld, John,
 Your locks are like the snaw;
 But blessings on your frosty pow,
 John Anderson my Jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
 We clamb the hill the gither;
 And mony a canty day, John,
 We've had wi' ane anither:
 Now we maun totter down, John,
 And hand in hand we'll go;
 And sleep the gither at the foot,
 John Anderson my Jo.

Scots Wha Hae, or, Robert Bruce's Address to His Troops at Bannockburn

Scots, wha hae wi' WALLACE bled,
 Scots, wham BRUCE has aften led,
 Welcome to your gory bed,—
 Or to victorie.—

Now 's the day, and now's the hour;
 See the front o' battle lour;
 See approach proud EDWARD'S power,
 Chains and Slaverie.—

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
 Wha can fill a cowards' grave?
 Wha sae base as be a Slave?

—Let him turn and flie.—

Wha for SCOTLAND's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
FREE-MAN stand, or FREE-MAN fa',
Let him follow me.—

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your Sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they *shall* be free!

Lay the proud Usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
LIBERTY 'S in every blow!
Let US DO—or DIE!!!

A Man's a Man for a' That

Is there for honest Poverty
That hings his head, an' a' that;
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that.
Our toils obscure an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine;
A Man's a Man for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that,
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His ribband, star, an' a' that,

The man o' independent mind,
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A Prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that!
But an honest man's aboon his might –
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' Sense an' pride o' Worth
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's comin yet for a' that,
That Man to Man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that.

Address to a Haggis

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great Chieftain o' the Puddin-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy of 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 ye 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 owre 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' bluidy 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 make 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 skinking ware
 That jaups in luggies;
 But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,
 Gie her a *Haggis*!

The Silver Tassie

Go bring to me a pint o wine,
 And fill it in a silver tassie;
 That I may drink, before I go,
 A service to my bonie lassie:
 The boat rocks at the pier o Leith,
 Fu loud the wind blows frae the Ferry,

The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
 And I maun leave my bony Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
 The glittering spears are rankèd ready,
 The shouts o war are heard afar,
 The battle closes deep and bloody.
 It's not the roar o sea or shore,
 Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
 Nor shouts o war that's heard afar –
 It's leaving thee, my bony Mary!

Up in the Morning Early

Cauld blaws the wind frae east to west,
 The drift is driving sairly;
 Sae loud and shrill's I hear the blast,
 I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Up in the morning's no for me,
 Up in the morning early;
 When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw,
 I'm sure its winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
 A' day they fare but sparely;
 And lang's the night frae e'en to morn,
 I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Up in the morning's no for me,
 Up in the morning early;
 When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw,
 I'm sure its winter fairly.

Here's a health to them that's awa

Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa;
 And wha winna wish gude luck to our cause,
 May never gude luck be their fa'!
 It's gude to be merry and wise,
 It's gude to be honest and true;

It's gude to support Caledonia's cause,
And bide by the buff and the blue.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to Charlie, the chief o' the clan,
Altho' that his band be sma'!
May Liberty meet wi' success!
May Prudence protect her frae evil!
May tyrants and tyranny tine i' the mist,
And wander their way to the devil!

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
Here's a health to Tammie, the Norlan' laddie,
That lives at the lug o' the law!
Here's freedom to them that wad read,
Here's freedom to them that wad write!
There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
But they whom the truth would indite.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
Here's chieftain M'Leod, a chieftain worth gowd,
Tho' bred amang mountains o' snaw;
Here's friends on baith sides o' the Forth,
And friends on baith sides o' the Tweed;
And wha wad betray old Albion's right,
May they never eat of her bread!

**Song Composed in August
(Now Westlin Winds)**

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirring wings
Among the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells,

The plover loves the mountains;
 The woodcock haunts the lonely dells,
 The soaring hern the fountains:
 Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,
 The path of man to shun it;
 The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
 The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
 The savage and the tender;
 Some social join, and leagues combine,
 Some solitary wander:
 Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
 Tyrannic man's dominion;
 The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
 The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

But, Peggy dear, the ev'ning's clear,
 Thick flies the skimming swallow,
 The sky is blue, the fields in view,
 All fading-green and yellow:
 Come let us stray our gladsome way,
 And view the charms of Nature;
 The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
 And ev'ry happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
 Till the silent moon shine clearly;
 I'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly prest,
 Swear how I love thee dearly:
 Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
 Not Autumn to the farmer,
 So dear can be as thou to me,
 My fair, my lovely charmer!

Craigieburn Wood

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigieburn,
 And blythe awakes the morrow;
 But a' the pride o' Spring's return
 Can yield me nocht but sorrow.

I see the flowers and spreading trees,

I hear the wild birds singing;
 But what a weary wight can please,
 And Care his bosom wringing!

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
 Yet dare na for your anger;
 But secret love will break my heart,
 If I conceal it langer.

If thou refuse to pity me,
 If thou shalt love another,
 When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
 Around my grave they'll wither.

The Winter it is Past

The winter it is past, and the summer comes at last
 And the small birds, they sing on ev'ry tree;
 Now ev'ry thing is glad, while I am very sad,
 Since my true love is parted from me.

The rose upon the breer, by the waters running clear,
 May have charms for the linnet or the bee;
 Their little loves are blest, and their little hearts at rest,
 But my true love is parted from me.

My love is like the sun, in the firmament does run,
 For ever constant and true;
 But his is like the moon that wanders up and down,
 And every month it is new.

All you that are in love and cannot it remove,
 I pity the pains you endure;
 For experience makes me know that your hearts are full of woe,
 A woe that no mortal can cure.

Green Grow the Rashes, O

Chor. - Green grow the rashes, O;
 Green grow the rashes, O;
 The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
 Are spent amang the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
 In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
 What signifies the life o' man,
 An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.
 Green grow, &c.

The war'ly race may riches chase,
 An' riches still may fly them, O;
 An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
 Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
 Green grow, &c.

But gie me a cannie hour at e'en,
 My arms about my dearie, O;
 An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men,
 May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!
 Green grow, &c.

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this;
 Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
 The wisest man the war' e'er saw,
 He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
 Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
 Her noblest work she classes, O:
 Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
 An' then she made the lasses, O.
 Green grow, &c.