

Halloween

*Yes! Let the rich deride, the proud disdain
The simple pleasures of the lowly train:
To me more dear, more congenial to my heart
One native charm, than all the gloss of art* —GOLDSMITH

Another of the Bard's lengthy works, this time describing some of the ancient customs and beliefs associated with Halloween. These customs had ceased many years before Rab wrote this piece, and he is relying largely upon the stories told to him as a child. In my opinion, this is one of the more difficult of Burns' works to understand as it is completely written in the Auld Scots.

Upon that night, when fairies light
On Cassilis Downans dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean, the rout is taen,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There up the Cove, to stray an' rove,
Amang the rocks an' streams
To sport that night:

Amang the bonie, winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin clear:
Where Bruce ance ruled his 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 fairies are about on Halloween, dancing in the light of the moonlight on the hillocks and heading out towards Culzean Castle and Culzean Bay.
Cassilis Downans = a house on the banks of the river Doon

Close to the Banks of the Doon, where Robert the Bruce once ruled, a crowd of country people are gathered for a Halloween party, where they will observe some old traditions.

nits = nuts; *pou their stocks* = counting the grain on a stalk of corn in pairs. To have an odd grain left meant little chance of marriage; *haud* = hold; *fu blythe* = merry

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
 Mair braw than when they're fine;
 Their faces blithe, fu' sweetly kythe,
 Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':
 The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs
 Weel knotted on their garten;
 Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs
 Gar lasses' hearts gang startin
 Whyles fast that night.

Then, first an' foremost, thro' the kail,
 Their stocks maun a' be sought ance;
 They steek their een, an' grape an' wale
 For muckle anes, an' straught anes.
 Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
 An' wandered thro' the bow-kail,
 An' pow'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' throw'ther;
 The vera wee-things, toddling, rin,
 Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther:
 An' gif the custock's sweet or sour,
 Wi' joctelebs they taste them;
 Syne cozie, aboon the door,
 Wi' cannie care, they've plac'd them
 To lie that night.

The girls were dressed for the occasion and
 the lads wore love knots on their garters.
feat = spruce; *kythe* = display; *leal* = loyal;
trig = smart; *wooer-babs* = love-knots; *garten*
 = garters; *unco blate* = very shy; *wi' gabs* =
 talk freely; *gar* = make

Into the field with eyes covered to try and
 find a stalk of corn. The stalk of corn can
 only be used once so it is important to get a
 strong one. Silly Will wanders into the
 cabbage patch, and pulls a stalk so bent it's
 like a sow's tail. *maun* = must; *steek their een*
 = close their eyes; *grape an' wale* = grope
 and choose; *muckle anes* = big ones; *straught*
 = straight; *hav'rel* = silly; *fell aff the drift* =
 got left behind; *bow-kail* = cabbage; *pow't* =
 pulled; *bow't* = bent

They all return through the yard with
 their stalks, the little children with long
 ones they carry over their shoulders. They
 cut the pith to see if it is sweet or sour
 then place them carefully around the door.
throw'ther = in disorder; *gif* = if; *custock* =
 pith; *joctelebs* = clasp-knife; *yird or nane* =
 dirty or not; *vera* = very; *rin* = run; *aboon*
 = around; *cannie* = careful

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a',
 To pou their stalks o' corn;
 But Rab slips out, and 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,
 Whan kiutlin in the fause-house
 Wi' him that night.

The auld guid-wife's weel-hoarded nits
 Are round an' round divided,
 An' monie a 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,
 An' 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*, and 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,
 And Jean had e'en a sair heart
 To see 't that night.

The girls sneak out to pull their stalks of corn, but Rab grabs Nelly and as all the girls scream he pulls her into the frame of the haystack.

skirl'd = screamed; *tap-pickle maist* = uppermost grain in stalk of oats; *her tap-pickle maist was lost* = euphemism for losing virginity; *kiutlin* = cuddling; *fause-house* = frame of haystack

An old lady dishes out nuts in another Halloween ritual. If two people's nuts roast well together, then all is well, but some explode and fly up the chimney indicating bad omens.

weel-hoarded = well-hoarded; *kindle couthie* = burn comfortably; *chimlie* = chimney

Jean put two nuts on the fire without disclosing who her chosen man was.

They seemed an ideal couple, but she was distressed when her intended's nut exploded and shot up the chimney.

tentie e'e = attentive eye; *bleez'd* = blazed; *lum* = chimney

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
 Was burnt wi' primsie Mallie;
 An' Mary, 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, an' swoor by jing,
 '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, stownlins, pri'd her bonie mou,
 Fu cozie in the neuk for 't,
 Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
 Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
 She lea's them gashing at their cracks,
 An' slips out by hersel:
 She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
 An' for the kiln she goes then,
 An' darklins grapit for the bauks,
 And in the blue-clue throws then,
 Right fear't that night.

Willie, with his misshapen stalk was paired
 off with a demure young lady who took the
 huff at being compared with him. Her nur
 flew out of the fire and burnt her foot while
 Willie swore thar he didn't care anyway.
primsie = demure; *drunt* = huff; *lap* = leapt;
ain fit = own foot; *swoor* = swore; *brunt* =
 burnt

Nell had memories of her earlier
 encounter with Rob as she puts their nuts
 in together. She was thrilled to see them
 burn happily until they became ash and
 Rob and her kissed tenderly in a corner
 unseen by the others.
ase = ash; *leuk* = look; *stownlins* = stealthily;
mou = mouth; *neuk* = nook

Merran has Andrew Bell on her mind and
 leaves the others gossiping as she tries
 another method of seeing into the future.
 By throwing blue yarn into the kiln would
 reveal ones' lover. She was very brave as a
 demon was believed to inhabit the kiln.
gashing at their cracks = gossiping; *darklins* =
 darkness; *grapit* = grabbed; *blue-clue* = blue
 yarn

An' ay she win't, an' ay she swat—
 I wat she made nae jaukin;
 Till something held within the pat,
 Guid Lord! but she was quakin!
 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 you go wi' me, graunie?
 I'll eat the apple at the glass,
 I gat frae uncle Johnie;
 She fluff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
 In wrath she was sae vap'rin,
 She notic't na, an aizle brunt
 Her braw, new, worstet 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:
 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.

She wound the yarn until something
 caught it, then she ran off shaking with
 terror without waiting to see if it was
 Andrew Bell, the beam or the Devil
 himself.

win't = wound; *swat* = sweat; *spier* = ask;
wat = assure; *nae jaukin* = didn't idle; *pat* =
 pot; *bauk-en* = beam end;

When Jenny asked her Granny to come
 with her whilst she ate an apple at the mirror
 (another Halloween custom that would
 show your future husband), the older
 woman flew into a rage and puffed hard
 upon her pipe, not even noticing the burn
 mark on her new apron.

fluff't = puffed; *lunt* = puff of smoke; *aizle* =
 ember

Hurling abuse at the youngster, she dared
 her to try this as it would tempt the devil to
 appear, and others have been left in a state of
 madness because of seeing him.

skelpie-limmer's face = young hussy; *daur* =
 dare; *Foul Thief* = Devil; *spae* = tell; *deleeret* =
 delirious; *sic* = such

'Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,
 I mind as weel's yestreen,
 I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
 I was na past fyfteen:
 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 fallow
 His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
 That liv'd in Achmacalla:
 He gat hemp-seed, I mind it weel,
 An' 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 seed him
 An' try't that night.

She has a clear memory of a Halloween party just before the Battle of Sherrifmuir when she was only fifteen. It had been a cold and wet summer and everything was uncommonly green.

hairst = harvest; *gilpey* = young girl; *simmer* = summer; *cauld an' wat* = cold and wet; *rantin kirn* = wild party

One fellow had spread out hemp-seed which was supposed to reveal the Devil, and although he made a joke of it, he was really scared afterwards.

stibble-rig = chief-harvester; *wean* = child

This tempted one of the lads to declare that it was all nonsense and that he would spread out the seed to prove it. An old man gave him a handful of seed but he waited until nobody was watching before he set out to try it.

fechtin = fighting; *raught* = reached; *pock* = bag; *syne bad him* = soon bade him

He marches thro' among the stacks,
 Tho' he was something sturtin;
 The graip he for a harrow taks,
 An' hauls at his curpin:
 And ev'ry now and then he says,
 'Hemp-seed I saw thee,
 An' her that is to be my lass
 Come after me, an' draw thee
 As fast this 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' tumbled wi' a wintle
 Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
 In dreadfu' desperation!
 An' young an' auld come 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
 Asteer that night?

Slightly frightened, he marches through
 the hay-stacks, hurling the pitchfork
 behind him, and repeating the rhyme.
sturtin = troubled; *graip* = pitchfork;
hauls at his curpin = hurls it behind him

His hair was standing on end with fear,
 when he heard some strange noises, and
 glancing over his shoulder tumbled over
 in terror.

fley'd an' eerie = terror stricken; *grane* =
 groan; *shouther* = shoulder; *keek* = glance;
wintle = somersault

His screams of terror brought the others
 running to help. He swore that he was
 followed by two of the most undesirable
 females in the area, but they discovered
 that he had been terrified by a pig on the
 loose.

hilchin = crippled; *crouchie* = hunchback;
Grumphie = the pig; *asteer* = astir

Meg fain wad to the barn gaen,
 To winn three wechts o' naething,
 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 rattl'd up the wa',
 An' she cry'd, Lord preserve her!
 An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
 An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
 Fu' fast that night.

Then hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;
 They hecht him some fine braw ane;
 It chan'd the stack he faddom't thrice,
 Was timmer-propt for thrawin;
 He taks a swirlie, auld moss-oak
 For some black, gruesome carlin;
 An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
 Till skin in blypes cam haurlin
 Aff's nieves that night.

Meg would have gone to the barn to sieve out some corn, and she wasn't too concerned about meeting the Devil. She handed over her apples and nuts to the shepherd to look after for her while she went in search of Tam Kipples.

fain = gladly; *wad* = would; *winn* = separate corn from chaff; *wecht* = sieve; *herd* = shepherd

She opened the barn door carefully, calling first for Sandy, then as she entered, a rat scurried up the wall scaring her so much that she ran straight through the muck-heap.

cannie thraw = careful turn; *Sawnie* = Sandy; *bauldly* = boldly; *ratton* = rat; *midden-hole* = dung-heap

They coaxed Will out with a promise of something good. He thought he was putting his arms three times round a stack, but it was a timber prop he had hold of. He then mistook an old tree for a witch and punched it until his knuckles were bleeding.

hecht = urged; *faddom't* = fathomed; *timmer-propt* = propped up; *swirlie* = gnarled; *loot a winze* = cursed; *drew a stroke* = struck; *blypes* = shreds; *haurlin* = hurling; *nieves* = fists

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As cantie as a kittlin;
But och! that night, amang the shaws,
She gat a fearful settlin!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scievin;
Whare three laird's lands met at a burn,
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' 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' bickerin, dancin dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazlel
Unseen that night.

Amang the brachens, 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.

Lizzie the widow was set on trying yet another method of finding a partner. If a lass were to immerse the left sleeve of her nightdress in the waters of a stream, the face of her intended would be revealed to her.
cantie as a kittling = lively as a kitten; *scievin* = ran swiftly; *whin* = gorse

The burn ran over a waterfall and round the rocks until it reached a pool under the hazel tree where it was hidden from the moonlight.
linn = waterfall; *wimpl't* = wimples; *scaur* = cliff; *cookit* = hidden; *wiel* = eddy

Poor Lizzie was leaning over the pool when she was suddenly scared by a strange noise which could have been the devil, or more likely a heifer lowing. She jumped up in terror and landed over her ears in the pool.
outler quey = heifer in a field; *croon* = low (cattle); *maist lap the hool* = nearly jumped out of her body; *lav'rock* = skylark; *mist a fit* = missed her footing; *owre the lugs* = over the ears

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
 The luggies three are ranged;
 An' ev'ry time great care is taen
 To see them duly changed;
 Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
 Sin' Mar's years did desire,
 Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
 He heav'd them on the fire,
 In wrath that night.

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

Three wooden dishes are arranged on the hearth, but frustrated old uncle John, who has picked the wrong one three times, was so mad that he threw them on the fire.

luggies = wooden dishes; *Mar's year* = 1715, the Jacobite Rebellion; *toom* = empty

The evening carried on with stories and jokes as the folks enjoyed their simple party, until it was time for a final drink and a stagger home.

cracks = chat; *butter'd sow'ns* = sour puddings; *lunt* = steam; *gabs a-steerin* = tongues wagging; *strunt* = alcohol; *wat* = assure

The Auld Farmer's New-Years Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare, Maggie

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR.

A lovely poem in which the farmer relives the many years that he has spent with his beloved old mare.

A Guid New-Year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie;
Tho' thou's howe-backit now, an' knaggie,
I've seen the day,
Thou could hae gane like ony staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff an' crazy,
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisie,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek an' glaizie,
A bonie 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 mear;
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

The farmer reminds his old mare that although she is showing her age, he can remember her running like a colt.

hae = here; *ripp* = handful of unthreshed corn; *auld baggie* = old stomach; *thou's howe-backit* = you're hollow-backed; *an' knaggie* = and knobbly; *hae gane* = have gone; *onie staggie* = any stag; *out-owre the lay* = over the meadow

Although the mare is now stiff and drooping, in her youth she had been a beautiful grey with a shiny coat, full of spirit. *thou's dowie* = you're sad; *hide* = coat; *dappl't* = dappled; *glaizie* = shiny; *bonie* = beautiful; *tight* = prepared; *daur't* = dared; *raize* = excite; *ance* = once

The mare had been as elegant and trim as any that walked on earth, and she could fly over pools like a bird. *buirdly, steeve an' swank* = strong, firm and elegant; *e'er tread yird* = ever walked on earth; *out-owre a stank* = over a pool

Twenty-nine years have now passed since he was given the mare as part of his wife's dowry, along with some money, and although it was not much, it did not matter as the horse was strong. *guid-father's meere* = father-in-law's mare; *gied* = gave; *tocher* = dowry; *stark* = strong

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
 Ye then was trottin wi' your Minnie:
 Tho' ye was trickie, slee an' funnie,
 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 bonie 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 hobble,
 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' skiegh,
 An' stable meals at fairs were driegh,
 How thou would prance, an' snore an'
 scriegh,
 An' tak the road!
 Towns-bodies ran, an' stood abiegh,
 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 ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
 Whare'er thou gaed.

When the farmer was courting, the mare was
 still a young foal running beside her mother,
 and although lively, she was well behaved.
gaed to woo = went to court; *minnie* =
 mother; *slee* = shy; *donsie* = mischievous;
hamely = homely; *tawie* = docile; *unco sonsie*
 = very well-mannered

When the bride arrived on the mare's back,
 the farmer was the proudest man in the
 county to have two such beautiful ladies.
wi' muckle = with great; *bure hame* = carried
 home; *Kyle-Stewart* = Ayrshire

The old horse struggles to walk properly,
 but he remembers when she could outrun
 all the others.
dow = can; *hoyte* = stagger; *saumont-coble* =
 salmon-boat; *wintle* = swing fom side to side;
jinker = goer; *wauble* = wobble

Neither farmer nor mare enjoyed the
 redium of the fairs, and the horse would
 prance and snort until they were on the
 road, shocking the townies with their speed.
skiegh = skittish; *driegh* = dreary; *wad* =
 would; *snore* = snort; *scriegh* = whinny; *abiegh*
 = at a distance; *ca't* = called

When the mare was fed and the farmer was
 happy, they would ride like the wind.
 Nothing could catch them at the traditional
 wedding races.
corn't = fed; *brooses* = wedding race from the
 church to the home of the bridegroom; *pith*
 = vigour; *pay't* = paid

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle
 Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
 But sax Scotch mile, thou try't their mettle,
 An gar't them whaizle:
 Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
 O' saugh or hazel.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',
 As e'er in tug or trow was drawn!
 Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,
 On guid March-weather,
 Hae turn'd sax roods beside our han',
 For days thegither.

Thou never braing'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 sprittie knowes wad rair't an' riskit,
 An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
 An' threatend labor 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.

Small hunters might win in a sprint, but
 over a distance she'd leave them behind
 without the need of whip or spurs.

sma' = small; *droop-rumpl't* = short-rumped;
aihlins waur't thee for a brattle = perhaps bear
 you in a short sprint; *sax* = six; *gar't them*
whaizle = made them wheeze; *a wattle o' saugh*
 = a wand of willow

The farmer tells her what a wonderful
 plough-horse she had been, and how much
 land they had turned over in a working day.
fittie-lan' = rear left-hand plough-horse; *aft* =
 often; *aight* = eight; *gaun* = gone; *sax rood* =
 acre and a half; *beside our han'* = by ourselves;
thegither = together

She never did anything unexpected while
 ploughing, pulling willingly over the roughest
 ground, and ignoring the danger.

Braing't = lunged; *fetch't* = stopped suddenly;
fliskit = fretted; *spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket*
 = thrust out your chest; *sprittie knowes* =
 tufted hillocks; *wad rair't an' riskit an' slypet owre*
 = would roar and rack until they broke up

During the difficulties of a severe winter, she
 would be given more feed, as the farmer knew
 she would not stop to rest until summer.

lang = long; *snaws* = snows; *cog* = dish;
timmer = edge; *ken'd* = knew

In cart or or car thou never reestit;
 The steyst brae thou wad hae fac'd it;
 Thou never lap, an' sten't, an' breastit,
 Then stood to blaw;
 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 has nurst:
 They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,
 The vera warst.

Mony a sair darg we twae hae wrought,
 An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
 An' mony an anxious day, I thought
 We wad be beat!
 Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
 Wi' something yet.

An' 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 stimper, 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.

The mare never stopped to rest when working, and she would go at a steep hill with no visible effort.
reestit = become restless; *steyst brae* = steepest slope; *lap, an' sten't, an' breastit* = leapt, or sprang or lunged; *blaw* = blow; *hastit* = faster; *snoov't awa* = went smoothly on

The ploughing team now consists of four of the mare's offspring, with another six having been sold to give the farmer a good profit.
pleugh = plough; *bairntime* = offspring; *forbye* = besides; *sax mae* six more; *sell't awa* = sold; *nurst* = nursed; *thretteen pund* = thirteen pounds; *vera warst* = very worst

The farmer reminds the mare of the many hard days they have shared together and how, in spite of everything, they are still here to enjoy their old-age.
sair darg = hard day's work; *twae* = two; *warl'* = world

He reassures the mare that although her working days are over, she need never worry about being fed as he would starve himself before Maggie went hungry.
fow = bushel; *heapit stimper* = heaped quarter peck; *ane laid by* = one set aside

The pair have aged together and will totter around in their old age. Maggie will have her own space to graze in peace for the rest of her life.
toyte = totter; *tentie* = prudent; *flit* = remove; *hain'd rig* = reserved space; *rax your leather* = fill your stomach; *sma' fatigue* = little exertion

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 and care;
There let bowse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.
Solomon's proverbs, xxxi, 6,7,*

Here we have fairly lengthy poem dedicated to the virtues of Scotch Whisky, and at the same time taking the opportunity to slam the imposition of tax upon such a popular drink.

It would appear that illegal stills were not uncommon in those distant days, and the excisemen also come under attack for their constant pursuit of such stills.

Let other poets raise a fracas,
'Bout vines and wines, and drucken Bacchus,
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug;
I sing the juice Scotch bear can make us,
In glass or jug.

O Thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch drink!
Whether thro' wimplin worms thou jink,
Or richly brown, ream owre the brink,
In glorious faem.
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn
An' airts set up their awnie horn,
An' pease and beans at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain:
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou king o' grain!

Burns has no interest in the praise of wines, nor in listening to others tell tales of Bacchus. For him, the only true drink comes from the barley of Scotland – whisky! *drucken* = drunken; *crrabbit* = ill-natured; *wrack* = punish; *grate our lug* = irritate our ear; *bear* = barley

As the whisky winds its way through the coils of the distilling apparatus, he is inspired by the rich, brown liquid foaming in the still. *wimplin'* = waving; *jink* = dodge; *ream* = froth; *faem* = foam

The Bard has no objection to the sight of fields of wheat, oats, peas and beans, but nevertheless his blessings are given to barley, the king of grain. *haughs* = meadows; *airts* = oats; *awnie* = bearded; *pease* = peas, *leeze on thee* = blessings on you; *John Barleycorn* = whisky

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
 In souple scones, the wale o' food!
 Or tumbling in the boiling 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 oild by thee,
 The wheels o' life gae down-hill, screevin',
 Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doired Lear,
 Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
 Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
 Ar's weary toil;
 Thou ev'n 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.

Although Scotland depends on barley for the making of favourite scones, or to thicken up the soup, it is only when in liquid form that its true value is revealed
aft = often; *chows her cood* = eats her food; *souple scones* = soft barley cakes; *wale* = choice; *kail* = cabbage

Food fills our bellies and keeps us alive, but life can seem to be nothing more than burdensome, weary toil, and whisky can help that life much more cheerful.
wame = belly; *leivin'* = living; *heavy dragg'd* = worn out; *wi' pine an' grievin'* = with suffering and grieving; *screevin'* = gliding easily; *rattlin'* = lively

Whisky can clear muddled heads as well as help dispel care and pain. Even the deepest despair can be lightened with a glass of whisky.
doired Lear = stupid customs

The gentry may serve their whisky in fancy silver cups, but it can always be relied on to be the poor man's wine and to supplement his meagre meal.
clad in massy siller weed = dressed in heavy silver; *gentles* = gentry; *wee drap parritch* = small drop of porridge; *kitchens* = makes palatable

Thou art the life o' public haunts,
But thee, what were our fairs and 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 mornin'
In cog or bicker,
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 come on like death
At ev'ry chaup.

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.

How dull life would be without whisky.
Festivals and Fairs are much livelier when
it is present, and the tents where it is sold
are always thronged with thirsty people.
public haunts = taverns; *what were our fairs
and rants* = that was our pleasure and joy;
saunts = saints; *fir'd* = affected

Harvest time is always cause for
celebration, but on New Year's morning,
whisky is especially enjoyed steaming hot,
with a drop of water from the burn and a
touch of sugar.
reams the horn in = froths in the cup; *reekin'*
= smoking; *cog or bicker* = wooden dishes;
gusty sucker = sugar

When ploughmen gather at the smithy, the
whisky froths in the cup, and the blacksmith
hammers more heartily after a drop.
when Vulcan gies his bellows braith = in the heat
of the smithy; *grraith* = harness; *fizz an' freath*
= hiss and froth; *lugget caup* = a two-handled
cup; *Burnewin* = blacksmith; *chaup* = blow

With no mercy for the iron or steel on which
he is working, the blacksmith's muscular
forearm causes his hammer to make the
anvil ring out aloud.
airn = iron; *bainie* = muscular; *chiel* = young
man; *owrehip* = a method of hammering; *block
an' studdie* = anvil and smithy; *dinsome* = noisy

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.

While celebrating a new baby with a drop of whisky, the women gossip about their husbands and forget to reward the midwife.
skirlin' weanies = shrieking babies; *clatter bright* = chatter noisily; *fumblin' cuifs* = awkward fools; *dearies slight* = insult their loved ones; *wae worth* = woe befall; *howdie* = midwife; *plack* = a small coin

When neebors anger at a plea,
 An' just as wud as wud can be,
 How easy can the barley-brie
 Cement the quarrell
 It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
 To taste the barrel,

Here the Bard speaks words of wisdom as he points out that it is far cheaper to have a drink with a neighbour to resolve a quarrel than to pay the fees of a lawyer.
neebor = neighbour; *wud* = mad; *barley-brie* = whisky; *aye* = always

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 season,
 E'er spier her price.

Sad to say, but we have reason to accuse some of our countrymen of treason because they consume drinks other than whisky, and they do not even ask the price.
alake = alas; *wyte* = blame; *weet their weason* = wet their throats; *spier* = ask

Wae worth that brandy, burnin' trash!
 Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash!
 Twins monie a poor, doylt, drucken hash
 O' half his days;
 An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
 To her warst faes.

Brandy is trash which causes painful hangovers and is the reason for so many lost working-days. What's more, the revenue from brandy goes to support the country's enemies.
fell = biting; *brash* = sickness; *twins* = deprives; *doylt drucken hash* = stupid drunken fellow; *warst faes* = worst foes

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.

If you wish Scotland well, then do not bother with fancy, foreign wines. They will do you no good at all.
chief = mainly; *plackless* = penniless; *dearthfu'* = expensive; *mell* = to meddle; *gill* = a measure of whisky

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'
whisky-punch Wi' honest men!

O Whisky! 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 arses!

Thee, Ferintosh! O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic-grips, an' barkin' hoast
May kill us a',
For loyal Forbes' chartered boast
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches o' the Excise,
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize!
Haud up thy han', Deil, ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor damnd drinkers.

May anyone who sneers at a man who enjoys a glass of whisky with his friends have a bladder that feels like gravel, and suffer from gout. *may gravels round his bladder wrench* = may kidney-stones give him pains in his bladder; *twists his gruntle wi' a grunch* = screws his face up in a frown

Burns acknowledges that his verses are often tuneless noises until he has had a glass of whisky, then the words come pouring out. *plays and pranks* = games and jokes; *cranks* = creakings; *ither's arses* = others backsides

In reparation for damage done during the Jacobite Rebellion, Ferintosh Distillery (owned by the Forbes family) had been freed from paying excise duty. This privilege was withdrawn in 1785, and the price of whisky escalated, depriving men of their favourite tippie.

colic grips = illness takes hold; *barkin' hoast* = barking cough; *ta'en awa* = taken away

Closing illicit stills was one of the main activities of the despised exciseman, and the devil is called upon to deal with them harshly. *horse-leeches* = blood-suckers; *stells* = stills; *haud up thy han'* = hold up your hand; *blinkers* = a form of contempt; *brunstane* = brimstone

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
 Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill,
 An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
 Tak a' the rest,
 An' deal 't about as thy blind skill
 Directs the best.

All the Bard wants from life are whole trousers, some food to eat along with his whisky, and some rhyme to produce at will. With these, he can accept whatever life has in store for him.

hale breeks = whole trousers; *rowth o'* = abundance of; *rave* = utter

To a Louse

ON SEEING ONE UPON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH

Here we have one of the Bard's masterpieces, illustrating in memorable lines just how easy it is to have the totally incorrect impression of how we see and are seen by our fellow mortals. The opening lines of the final verse are renowned throughout the world.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie?
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho', faith! I fair, ye dine but sparely,
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner.
Detested, shunn'd, by saunt an' sinner
How daur ye 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 hauffet squattle,
There ye may creep, and sprawl,
and sprattle,
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle;
In shoals and nations;
Whaur horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there! ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rils, snug and tight,
Na faith ye yet ! ye'll no' be right
Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'rin height
O' Miss's bonnet.

When he first notices the louse, he marvels at its nerve to roam over this fine lady.

whare ye gaun = where are you going; *crowlin'*
ferlie = crawling marvel; *sairly* = sorely; *ow're*
= over; *sic* = such

Now he suggests that it is quite wrong for it to be on such a fine lady, and it should find some poor person on which to seek its meal.
blastit wonner = worthless wonder; *saunt* = saint; *fit* = foot; *sae* = so

He tells the louse that it would be much more at home with a beggar, sharing that space with its peers in the parasite world where there would be little chance of being routed out by a comb. *swith* = quick; *hauffet* = sideburns; *squattle* = squat; *sprattle* = scramble; *ither* = other; *horn nor bane* = a comb made from horn or bone; *daur* = dare

Now hold on! The creature has disappeared and it is not going to be content until it is right on top of the lady's hat.

haud ye there = wait; *fatt'rils* = ribbon ends, *vera* = very; *tow'rin* = towering

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
 As plump an' grey as onie grozet;
 O for some rank, mercurial rozet,
 Or fell, red smeddum,
 I'd gie you sic a hearty dose o't
 Wad dress your droddum!

I wad na been surpris'd to spy
 You on an auld wife's flannen toy;
 Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
 On's wylecoat;
 But Miss's fine Lunardi! fye!
 How daur ye do 't?

Oh Jenny, dinna toss your head
 An' set your beauties a' abroad!
 Ye little ken what cursed speed
 The blastie's makin!
 Thae winks an' finger-ends, I dread
 Are notice takin'!

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
 To see oursels as ithers see us!
 It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
 An' foolish notion,
 What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
 An' ev'n devotion!

Here he sees that the louse is quite plump, and is as grey as a gooseberry. He wishes he had some insect repellent to use on it. *bauld* = bold; *grozet* = gooseberry; *rozet* = rosin; *fell red smeddum* = biting red powder; *o't* = of it; *wad* = would; *dress your droddum* = hurt you in the trousers

He would expect the creature to be on an old lady's flannel cap, or on a lad's ragged vest, but not on a fine Lunardi bonnet. *wad na been* = would not have been; *auld wife's flannen toy* = old woman's flannel cap with side flaps; *aiblins* = perhaps; *duddie* = ragged; *wyliecoat* = a flannel vest; *daur* = dare

He now makes a silent plea that the lady does not shake her head and spread out her hair as she is totally unaware of what Burns is watching with such fascination. *dinna* = do not; *yer* = your; *set your beauties a' abroad* = toss your curls; *ken* = know; *blastie* = ugly little creature

Finally, the poet asks us to consider ourselves – are we really all that we think we are. Would we stop making foolish comments about others if we understood just how they saw us? *monie* = many; *lea'e* = leave; *wad* = would

Love and Liberty – a Cantata

THE JOLLY BEGGARS

Burns was drinking in Poosie Nansie's tavern in Mauchline, watching the antics of a group of beggars, when he decided to embark upon this work. It was his only attempt to write something that could be staged and appears to have been influenced by 'The Beggar's Opera.' This is another wonderfully descriptive piece, full of life and vitality.

RECITATIVO

When lyart leaves bestrew the yird,
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,
Bedim cauld Borea's 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 Poosie Nansie's held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies;
Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted an' they sang,
Wi' jumping an' thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

First, niest 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 gied the tozie drab
The rither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an aumous dish.
Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Line onie cadger's whup;
Then staggering an' swaggering,
He roar'd this ditty up:—

It was the start of winter and a group of beggars were drinking noisily in the inn.
lyart = withered; *yird* = ground; *bauckie-bird* = bat; *Borea's blast* = north-wind; *skyte* = lash; *hoary cranreuch* = hoar frost; *core o' randie, gangrel bodies* = gang of unruly ruffians; *held the splore* = a dinking bout was held; *orra duddies* = spare rags; *ranred* = roistered; *the vera girdle* = the very griddle

Next to the fire sat an old soldier, his uniform in rags, and with his female companion in his arms, warm with whisky and covered in blankets. Kissing her loudly, he suddenly stood up and began to sing.
niest = next; *brac'd wi' mealy bags* = fed with oatmeal, the common alms at that time; *doxy* = sweetheart; *usquebae* = whisky; *sodger* = soldier; *tozie* = tipsy; *drab* = slut; *gab* = mouth; *aumous* = alms; *cadger's whup* = hawker's whip

AIR

TUNE: *Soldier's 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, etc..

My prenticeship I past, where my leader
breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the
heights of Abram;
And I served out my trade when the gallant
game was play'd,
And the Moro low was laid at the sound of
the drum.

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 the
drum.

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 us'd in scarlet to follow a drum.

The old soldier had fought in many wars
and was always pleased to show off his
battle scars – some for women, others for
trenches.

He goes on to describe the many bloody
encounters in which he has been involved.
heights of Abram = General Wolfe's routing
of the French at Quebec in 1759; *the Moro*
= the fortress defending Santiago in
Cuba, stormed by the British in 1762

His sevice career had ended at the siege of
Gibraltar where he had lost an arm and a leg,
but he would still fight if called upon.
Curtis = Admiral Sir Roger Curtis;
Elliot = General George Elliot

Although reduced to begging, he is just as
happy with his lot as he was as a soldier.
callet = prostitute

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.

RECITATIVO

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

AIR

TUNE: *Sodger 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 lal, etc.,

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 was I with my sodger laddie.

He is now forced to sleep outdoors in all
 weathers, but as long as he can sell
 something and buy a bottle he will face up
 to the Devil's army.

The rafters shook with the applause as he
 finished, but before he could take an
 encore, the camp whore rose to her feet
 and all was quiet.

kebars sheuk = rafters shook; *aboon* = above;
rattons = rats; *benmost bore* = innermost
 hole; *martial chuck* = camp whore

She had no idea of her age but knew that
 her father had been a dragoon, so she
 loved all the young soldiers.

Her first love had been a drummer and
 she had been besotted by him.

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 risked the body,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
One and all, cry out, Amen!

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sor,
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.

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 it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.

And now I have liv'd – I know not how long!
And still I can join in a cup and a song,
But whilst with both hands I can hold the
glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.

RECITATIVO

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

However, an affair with the camp chaplain
soon put an end to her relationship with
the drummer.

She rapidly grew sick of the chaplain and
made herself available to anyone in the
regiment, irrespective of rank.

Peacetime reduced her to poverty and
despair until she met up with her soldier,
his ragged uniform attracting her to him.

And now she's lived, she doesn't know for
how long and she can still join in with
the drinking and singing – while she can
hold her glass, she'll toast her soldier.

Merry-Andrew was busily engaged in
drinking with his tinker girl friend, paying
no attention to what was going on, until
he rose drunkenly, kissed the girl, and
with a serious face, tuned up his pipes.
tinkler-hizzie = tinker hussy; *teuk* = took,
stoiter'd = staggered; *syne* = then

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 a 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 tied up like a stirk,
 For civilly swearing and quaffing!
 I, ance was abused i' the kirk,
 For towsing a lass i' my daffin'.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport
 Let naeboddy name wi' a jeer;
 There's even, I'm tauld, i' the Court
 A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
 Mak faces to tickle the mob?
 He rails at our mountebank squad—
 Its rivalry 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',
 Guid Lord! he's far dafter than I.

The wise man and the knave may be fools
 when they're drunk, but he is a fool at all
 times.

fou = drunk; *trow* = trust

His grandmother bought him a book, and
 he went to school, but just wasted his
 time. *held awa* = went off; *beuk* = book;
misteuk = mistook

He would do anything for a drink, and
 girls were half of his downfall, but what
 else could one expect from one so stupid?

He has been humiliated by the courts and the
 church for his misdeeds. *tyed up like a stirk* =
 put in an iron collar and chained to a post;
towsing a lass i' my daffin' = oblique reference to
 having sex out of marriage

Let nobody miscall him because he is a
 clown. He has been told that the prime-
 minister is also a clown.

tauld = told

Watch how the preacher puts on funny
 expressions while sermonising. It's just
 what Andrew does to amuse the crowds.

He may have been born stupid, but a man
 who's a fool to himself is even more so.

RECITATIVO

Then neist outspak a raucle carlin,
 Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin',
 For monie a pursie she had hookit,
 An' had in mony a well been doukit;
 Her love had been a Highland laddie,
 But weary fa' the waefu woodie!
 Wi' sighs an' sobs she thus began
 To wail her braw John Highlandman:

AIR

TUNE: O, an ye were dead, Guidman

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!

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.

With his phillibeg, an' tartan plaid,
 An' guid claymore down by his side,
 The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
 My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
 An' liv'd like lords an' ladies gay,
 For a Lalland face he fearèd nane,
 My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

The next on her feet was a fat old hag, well
 experienced in stealing and picking pockets,
 and who had been ducked in many wells for
 her misdemeanours. She told of her love for
 a highlander amid sobs and tears.

raucle carlin = fat hag; *cleek the sterlin'* = steal
 money; *douked* = ducked; *woodie* = dimwit

She was in love with a Highlander.
lalland = lowland

The ladies all loved him in his kilt and with
 his claymore.
phillibeg = short kilt; *claymore* = broadsword;
trepan = ensnare

They travelled the lenght and breadth of
 Scotland living well off their spoils.

They banishid him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.

He was to be deported and tears ran down
her cheeks as she embraced him.

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!

However, when he was eventually caught,
the punishment was changed to hanging.

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.

She now mourns for her past life and has
no comfort apart from the drink.

RECITATIVO

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha' used at trystes an' fairs to driddle,
Her strappin' limb an' gawsie middle
(He reach'd nae higher)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

A midget fiddler stood up to tell how he had
lost his heart to the much larger lady.
trystes = cattle round-ups; *driddle* = work very
slowly; *gawsie* = buxom; *blawn't* = blown it

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.

Gazing skywards and with hand on hip,
the little fellow sang chirpily.
hainch = haunch

AIR

TUNE: *Whistle owre the lave o't*

lave o't = rest of it.

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.'*

Let me ryke up to dight that tear,
An' go wi' me an' be my dear,
An' then your ev'ry care an' fear
May whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns an' weddings we'se be there,
An' O', sae nicely's we will fare;
We'll bouse about till Daddie Care
Sings *Whistle owre the lave o't*.

Sae merrily's the banes we'll pyke,
An' sun oursels about the dyke;
An' at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't!

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
An' while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sick harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.

He will wipe any tears and take good care
of her.

ryke = reach; *dight* = wipe.

They will play at all sorts of functions and
they'll do well, drinking without a care in
the world.

kirns = merry-making at end of harvest

They will enjoy a life of eating and of
relaxation with no worries to weigh them
down.

banes = bones; *pyke* = pick; *dyke* = wall

If she gives in to him he will play his fiddle
and ensure her wellbeing.

kittle hair on thairms = tickle the fiddle
strings

RECITATIVO

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
 As weel as poor gut-scraper;
 He tak's the fiddler by the beard,
 An' draws a roosty rapier—
 He swore by a' was swearing worth,
 To speet him like a pliver,
 Unless he would from that time forth
 Relinqish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor Tweedle-Dee
 Upon his hunkers bended,
 And pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
 An' 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 Cauldron*

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 ta'en the gold, an' been enroll'd
 In many a noble squadron;
 But vain they search'd when off I march'd
 To go an' clout the cauldron.

Unfortunately for the midget, the lady's charms had also attracted the attention of another tinkler who threatened to murder the midget if he carried on with his amorous pursuit.

caird = tinkler; *roosty rapier* = rusty sword;
speet = skewer; *pliver* = plover

The midget had no choice but to concede, although he managed a quiet snigger when he heard the tinkler address the lady.
hunkers = haunches; *snirtle* = snigger

He was a tinkler who worked with brass, and although he had often taken the King's bounty to join the army, he had no qualms about deserting when the brass cauldron needed a patch.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
 Wi' a' his noise an' caperin';
 An' take a share wi' those that bear
 The budget and the apron.
 An' by that stoup, my faith an' houp!
 And by that dear Kilbaigie!
 If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
 May I ne'er weet my craigie.

He pleads with her to ignore the midget
 and join him in his brass business. Not
 another drop of liquor will he drink if he
 should let her down.

stoup = cup; *Kilbaigie* = a nearby whisky
 distillery; *weet my craigie* = wet my throat

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 o' spunk,
 Wish'd unison between the pair,
 And made the bottle clunk
 To their health that night.

The tinker won the affections of the lady,
 but only because she was too drunk to
 resist. The fiddler appeared to take his
 defeat with good grace and drunk the
 health of the tinker and the woman.

But urchin Cupid shot a shaft,
 That play'd a dame a shavie,
 The fiddler rak'd her fore and aft,
 Behint the chicken caviae.
 Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,
 Tho' limping wi' the spavie,
 He hirpl'd up, an' lap like daft,
 An' shor'd them *Dainty Davie*
 O' boot that night.

However, he eventually persuaded her to
 join him in lovemaking behind the
 chicken sheds, and when the tinker
 discovered them he appears to have
 offered the midget his lady friend free for
 the rest of the night.

hurchin = urchin; *shavie* = trick; *chicken*
caviae = hen-coop; *spavie* = bone-disease;
shor'd = offered; *boot* = free

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 no wish but — to be glad,
 Nor want but — when he thirsted;
 He hated nought but — to be sad,
 An thus the Muse suggested
 His sang that night.

The tinker was not someone to be
 burdened with care, he was happy when
 his thirst was quenched so he stood up to
 give a song when requested.

AIR

TUNE; *For a' that, an' a' that*

CHORUS

*For a' that, an' a' that,
 An' twice as muckle's a' that,
 I've lost but ane, I've twa bebin'.
 I've wife eneugh for 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.

He may be a nobody to the educated
 people, but crowds of ordinary people enjoy
 listening to him.
glow'rin' byke = staring crowds

I never drank the Muses' stank,
 Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
 But there it streams an' richly reams,
 My Helicon I ca' that.

Without the benefit of a formal education,
 he is still able to find inspiration for his
 work.
stank = pool; *reams* = froth

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.

thraw = thwart

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love an' a' that;
But for how lang the flee may stang,
Let inclination law that!

He understands that love can come and go
as quickly as an insect bite.
flie = fly; *stang* = sting

Their tricks an' crafts hae put me daft,
They've ta'en me in, an' a' that;
But clear your decks, an' here's the Sex!
I like the jads for a' that.

He may have been taken in by the wiles of
young women on many occasions, but he
still loves them all.
jads = young women

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 sang the Bard – and Nansie's wa's
Shook wi' 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

Thunderous applause greeted the poet as
the crowd frantically emptied their pockets
and sold their belongings to pay for another
drink as they beseeched him to sing again.
room'd their pocks = emptied their pockets;
co'er their fuds = cover their backsides; *lowan*
drouth = burning thirst; *lowse* = untie

The poet did request
To lowse 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.

wale = choose

his twa Deborahs = see Judges v. 12

AIR

TUNE: *Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses*

CHORUS

*A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.*

See! the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial, ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing.

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!

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.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?

Life is all a variorium,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all, cry out—Amen!

The final verses of the Cantata are dedicated to praising the lifestyle of the beggars and asking which is more important, pleasure or treasure?

callets = wenches.