



THE POETS OF WEST STORMONT

Michael Lawrence

The Poets

Anonymous

Passing down history through an oral tradition is common in most cultures across the world. These ballads have been taught, swapped, adopted and refined through the generations with the origin lost in the mists of time. Common themes are murder, death, treachery in love, the supernatural, revenge, the beautiful daughter, the dead sons, the cruel mother, the unpleasant laird and so on. The ballad format is designed to tell a story through song and typically follows a stanza style of four lines, with a common metre that aids memory.

James Brown

Very little known about James Brown. He was born and bred in Stanley and was a worker at Stanley Mills. He died of consumption, aged 24.

John Campbell/Will Harrow

James Campbell was born 1808 at Charleston Farm between Murthly and Stanley and died in 1892 in Stanley. He worked on his father's farm until aged 25 and then moved to Dundee and from 1833 to 1840 worked in the mills. He moved to Glasgow for three years. Campbell was married twice but both wives died within two years. He returned to Charleston, bought out his father and brother, and managed the family farm. While there his two children also died. He emigrated to join his sister in South Africa in 1871. After six years in the Cape, Campbell returned to Stanley where he lived for the rest of his life. He is buried at Kinclaven Churchyard. He wrote under the pen name of Will Harrow and was a regular contributor to the Blairgowrie Advertiser, The People's Journal and The People's Friend.

James Duff

James Duff was born in Methven Parish in the final quarter of the 18th century. He also fits the mould of a peasant poet and was employed as a gardener for most of his working life and worked at big houses such as Logie House, Gaskhill House and Blair Castle. He also worked as a quarryman at Logiealmond. He served for a long time in the 4th Battalion of the Royal Perth Volunteers during the years of the Napoleonic Wars and his officers had a whip round to pay for the publication of his 'A Collection of Poems, Songs etc. chiefly Scottish' in 1816. Again, only a handful of copies were printed.

James Ferguson/Nisbet Noble

James Ferguson was born 1842 in Stanley and died July 1910 in Stanley. He worked at Stanley Mills from age 10 to 14 and then worked as a grocery apprentice in Dundee. After moving to Glasgow, he was employed variously as an engine keeper, time keeper and counting house clerk. Ferguson returned to Perth to work at Pullers for twelve years, then the Inland Revenue and the Perth Co-op.

Eventually Ferguson returned home to Stanley to work as a warping foreman at the Spinning Mills. He published 'Song of Solomon' in 1873. 'Lays of Perthshire' in 1880 and 'Wallace and other Poems' in 1897. He wrote poetry under the pseudonym of Nisbet Noble in The People's Journal, The People's Friend, and in the newspapers of Perthshire. He also wrote a series called 'Reminiscences of Sanders M'Sneeshin' in the Weekly Free Press and Aberdeen Herald.

Jessie King

Jessie King was born in Bankfoot in 1862 and educated at Auchtergaven Public School, where she was dux medallist, Sharp's Institution in Perth, and University College, Dundee. After winning several essay prizes, she was invited by John Leng to join the Dundee Advertiser. By 1890, Jessie King was the best-known woman journalist in Scotland. She wrote as "Marguerite" in the Dundee Advertiser and the Evening Telegraph and as "Jeanette" in the People's Friend. King held high office in both the Liberal Party and the British Women's Temperance Association. In 1908, she married William Batey, a Director of the London & North Eastern Railway, and thereafter lived in Newcastle and York. Jessie King died in 1947.

Robert Nicoll

Robert Nicoll was born at Little Tullybelton near Bankfoot in 1814 and only attended school part-time. Robert was working as a herd boy by the age of seven before becoming a gardener at Tullybelton House when he was 12. At age 16, he was taken on as a grocery apprentice in Perth by the Hay Robertson family. In his spare-time he wrote short stories and poems. The apprenticeship was completed in 1834 and within a year he had published his first book of poetry, "Poems and Lyrics".

Robert Nicoll opened a library and book shop in Dundee in 1835 and wrote articles for the Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser. He also taught at the Dundee Mechanics Institute. In August 1836, Nicoll was appointed Editor of the Leeds Times. He was soon railing against exploitative factory owners, the employment of children in mills, corrupt politicians and hypocritical churchmen. And he continued to write poetry.

Unfortunately, poor health forced his resignation in October 1837 and Robert Nicoll died of tuberculosis in Edinburgh on 7th December 1837 at only 23 years of age. A full anthology of his poems was published posthumously to critical and popular acclaim. In an article "Burns and his School" in the North British Review of November 1851, the eminent writer Charles Kingsley wrote that "the young peasant who most expressly stands out as the pupil and successor of Burns, is Robert Nicoll".

William Nicoll

William Nicoll was born 1817 at Little Tullybelton and was the younger brother of Robert Nicoll. William was apprenticed to a cloth merchant on George Street in Perth. After seven years he moved to Glasgow and then Edinburgh, working as a draper's clerk and bookkeeper. He was no more than an occasional writer but his poems were shown in several publications. William Nicoll died in 1855 and is buried in the same grave as his brother Robert in the North Leith Churchyard.

William Paton

William Paton was born on 20 May 1875 at Drummonds Haugh in Luncarty and died on 11 November 1933 at Tayview in Luncarty. He was employed for most of his life by Burt Marshall Limited at the Luncarty Bleachworks as a cloth finisher. Paton published three books of poetry – 'Songs of Luncarty' (1904), 'Ingle Blinks' (1923) and 'Hame Links' (1930). Written in the local vernacular, his poems were simple, unpretentious, observational and humorous.

John Reid/Pate Pleugh

John Reid was born 9 October 1849 in Stanley. He was a very bright pupil and chosen as a pupil teacher in the Stanley village school. After seven years as a teacher, he continued his education at the Kinnoull Street Academy in Perth. He then worked as a clerk in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh. He returned to Perthshire when he was appointed as manager of Manor Farm at Marlee near Blairgowrie. Reid was a regular contributor of poems to The Weekly News and The People's Friend. John Reid used Pate Pleugh as his nom de plume.

William Robertson

William Robertson was born in Dundee on 25 January 1833. He worked in a spinning mill with his father as overseer. He was promoted to an office job but didn't like the mill life and left to serve an apprenticeship in a grocer's shop before joining the Post Office as a money order clerk. Robertson moved to Bankfoot in 1878 as a clerk in the Airleywight Linen Works. He later moved to the Auchtergaven Provision Society as a salesman. William Robertson started writing poetry after he settled in the village of Bankfoot and was a frequent contributor to The Peoples Journal, The Weekly News, and The Courier. 'Heart Echoes', was published after his death in 1891. He is buried in Auchtergaven Parish churchyard.

James Sim

James Sim from Kinclaven was cut from similar cloth to Robert Burns. After the most basic of schooling, he worked as a farm servant on the Ballathie Estate and later at Carolina Place in St Martins. His 'Poems on Various Subjects, Local and General' was published in 1811. The print run was very small. Sim was a self-proclaimed protector of local virtues and used satire and humour to attack those who failed to meet his standards. He was regularly criticised for his liberal use of coarse language.

Bessie Bell an' Mary Gray

O Bessie Bell an' Mary Gray!
They were twa bonnie lasses –
They biggit a bower on yon burn-brae,
An' theekit it ower wi' rashes.

They theekit it ower wi' rashes green,
They happit it round wi' heather;
But the pest cam' frae the burrows-toun,
An' slew them baith thegither.

They thought to lie in Methven Kirk,
Beside their gentle kin;
But they maun lie in Dronach-haugh,
And beak fornent the sun.

O Bessie Bell and Mary Gray!
They were twa bonnie lasses –
They biggit a tower on yon burn-brae,
An' theekit it ower wi' rashes.

Anonymous

The Bonnie Banks o' Ordie

Well, there were twa sisters wha lived in a bouer
Oh an' they gaed out aye tae pu' a flouer
They gaed out aye tae pu' a flouer
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

Whan by there cam' a banisht man
Oh he's turned them 'roun' an' he's made them stand
He's turned them 'roun' an' he's made them stand
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

He's taen the first ane by the hand
Oh he's turned her 'roun' an' he's made her stand
He's turned her 'roun' an' he's made her stand
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"Noo it's will ye be a robber's wife?
Or will ye die by my penknife?
Will ye die by my penknife?"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"No, I'll no be a robber's wife
And nor will I die by your penknife
Will I die by your penknife"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

So he's taen oot his wee penknife
Oh and he hae taen o' her life
He hae taen o' her life
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie O

So he's taen the second ane by the hand
Oh he's turned her 'roun' an' he's made her stand
He's turned her 'roun' an' he's made her stand
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"Oh it's will ye be a robber's wife?
Or will ye die by my penknife?
Will ye die by my penknife?"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"No, I'll no be a robber's wife
Nor will I die by your penknife
Will I die by your penknife"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"For I hae brither in this country
Well, if you kill me, he'll kill thee
If you kill me, then it's he'll kill thee"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie O

"Gae tell tae me yer brither's name"
"My brither's name, it's Babylon
My brither's name, it's Babylon"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

"Oh sister, what hae I done tae thee?
Hae I done this dreadful thing tae thee?
Hae I done this dreadful thing tae thee?"
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie

So he's taen oot his wee penknife
An' he hae taen o' his ain life
He hae taen o' his ain life
A' doun by the bonnie banks o' Ordie O

Anonymous

Transformation

Hail, beauteous stranger! Come away,
Arrayed in Nature's garb so gay,
In thy wee house for mony a day,
Thou hast been bidin',
Resolved nae langer there to stay,
Thou'st left thy hidin'.

An' O ye're buskit up fu braw –
Sic finery who ever saw?
What's a' the grandeur man can shaw
O' art's preparin'?
Compared wi' thine, the best o't a',
's no worth the wearin'.

Weel may ye prance and shak yere horn,
No queen was e'er so nobly born,
For ye may rank at e'en or morn
Man, Nature's beaux,
And proudly look around wi' scorn,
On a' your foes.

The painted wings are tinged sae fine,
Thy twa blue een like diamond shine,
They horn as straight as ony line
Fu' high aspirin'.
My very sight I'm like to tyne
Thy dress admirin'.

But, stranger, hearken to my tale,
Nor let your pride o'er far prevail,
Dost thou na mind whan thou didst steal,
Wi' creepin' pace,
An' dig thy horn into my kail
Before my face.

The bairns then gaed saucy by thee,
Or wi' disgust at least did eye thee;
But let them come and now espy thee,
Sae fine equippit,
O' how they'd rin to overhie thee,
And get thee grippit.

Had Nature, pardon if I speak it,
But left a wee bit hole unsneekit,
Sae slyly in wad I ha'e keekit,
Wi' canny care,
To see how thy wee joints are eekit,
And built sae fair.

O Nature, how thou claim'st our wonder!
Thou works unseen where nane can hinder,
The mair we see we're aye the blinder
O' a' thy ways,
Stay, tiny Art and hide behind her
Thy stolen bays.

James Brown

A Voice from Stanley Mills

December 1863

The traffic in our grass-grown streets is thinning,
(A donkey on the verdure fondly browses),
And none are left, alas! to do the spinning,
Except the spiders in the empty houses.

Here merry maids the smooth footpaths have trod,
Like blooming rose-buds linked by twos and threes,
With swift feet tripping o'er the silvan road –
Their snowy kirtles waving in the breeze.

“It was a merry place in days of yore;
But something ails it now – the place is curst;”
For long the wolf's been howling at the door,
And long in our midst the brute has burst.

And from its hungry glare the fleet did flee,
Some to St Mungo – others hied to Blair –
But most have winged their flight to sweet Dundee,
Hoping to get a crust and welcome there.

John Campbell/Will Harrow

To Ye Linn o' Campsie

July 1864

Ootrageous cataract; with poetic eye
I view the waters rush tumultuous by,
An' canna comprehend, O Linn, how ever
Your narry chops can twig this mighty river.
I canna think, O Tay, what's in your head,
To lat thae hammocks lie intil yer bed;
Tho' ye bring doon some tearin' Heelan' spates –
It seems ye canna push them oot o' gaits –
It widna be sae akwart if thae rocks
Wid lie intil a bed like ither focks –
But lyin' richt across, they gar ye thraw,
And hurl yer tide up to the very wa';
An' syne ye bock and buller, dash and roar,
An' wammle wildly doon thro' Bellymore;
Whirlin' like pettycoats o' angry women,
When they are counter't richt, an' set a screamin',
And daddlin' things aboot, an' slammin' doors,
And ca'an men-fock ugly brutes an' bores –
There's muckle, doubtless, in your awfu' belly
That ye hae swallet up, ye ragin' felly –
Maybe water kelpies in your caves
A-dancin' to the music o' your waves,
A jingo-ring around that mild young man,
The whilome chieftain o' a Hielan' clan,
Wha cudna face the dirks, an' sae did flich
The awfu' tuizie on the Perth Nor' Inch –
He cudna' bear the thocht o' bein' woondit,
But didna mind, it seems, for bein' droondit;
Dash on, great Stream, bock thro' your rocky portal,
This aqueous ode will mak' your name immortal!

John Campbell/Will Harrow

Epistle to Tammas Bodkin

1872

I'm sittin' 'mang the burnin' sand,
Elbow on knee an' chin on loof,
Musin' on life's ravelled web,
Entangled warp and woof;
An' like to greet wi' bootless grievin'
At the claith sae marred in weavin'.

Some folk hae talents nine or ten,
Some only ane or twa;
The feck o' folk hae less or mair,
But I hae nane ava.
An' though you shak' the napkin oot
Ye'll no find ochtlins in the cloot.

When folks wi' talents gathered gear –
They wha had hands and harns –
I boost be goavin' I' the air
An' glowerin' at the starns.
I hadna talents – what was worse,
I had nae siller I' my purse.

An' sae the wolf began to howl,
An' chased me far away;
Far frae the braes o' sweet Strathmore,
An' the flowery banks o' Tay;
Doon the Tay an' owre the Tyne,
An' far besouth earth's central line.

An' here I am 'mang burnin' sand,
Whaur rude sou'easters blow,
That lift the sand up bodily,
An' drive it to an' fro;
An' whirl it through the blazing lift,
Mair fierce than e'en Kingussie drift.

There's no a runnin' river here
In a' this parched land;
They've maistly a' a string o' pools
Slow sinkin' through the sand.
Or owre the scaurs, as at Lodore,
A gill a minute, less or more.

Musin' on my ain dear Tay,
That fond remembered river,
That sweeps around my natal ground,
Majestical as ever –
Musin' on that lovely stream
I fell asleep an' dreamed a dream.

I dreamed I lay on Table Bay,
The "sounding sea" before,
An' there I saw Poe's classic crow
Hop, hopping on the shore.
Hopping, hopping, ever hopping,
Hopping on the sandy shore.

With quivering lips I cried, "Oh raven
Will I never see Kinclaven,
Or Strathmore, or any place
On Scotia's classic shore?"
But the prophetic carrion crow –
The oracle of Edward Poe –
Sat croaking – "Nevermore."

John Campbell/Will Harrow

Lassie wi' the Yellow Coatie

Lassie wi the yellow coatie,
Wud ye wad a muirland jockie?
Lassie wi the yellow coatie,
Wud ye busk and gang wi me?
I hae meal and milk in plenty,
I hae kale and cakes fu dainty,
I hae a but and ben fu gentie,
But I want a wife like thee.
Ower the lea and through the boggie,
Wi ma lassie and ma doggie,
Nane on earth wud be sae vogie,
As ma lass and I wud be.
Haste ye lassie tae ma bosom,
While the roses are in blossom,
Time is precious dinna lose them,
Floors wud fade and so will we.
Lassie wi the yellow coatie,
Wud ye wad a muirland jockie?
Lassie wi the yellow coatie,
Wud ye busk and gang wi me?

James Duff

The Hero of Barossa

Assist me ye muses of dear native Scotia,
While thus in the praise o' your hero I sing,
Wha lately displayed on the heights of Barossa,
Sic zeal for his kintry, an' love to his king.

'Twas there he despis'd ev'ry an' peril;
'Twas there he resolv'd British valour to show;
And there our brave vet'ran was crowned wi' fresh laurels,
For there he encounter'd an' vanquish'd the foe.

The cause o' his country first call'd him to arms,
And soon were the proofs o' his valour display'd:
Sweet rural retirement could yield him no charms,
Compar'd to what an' the trumpet convey'd.

At Toulon an' Malta, no valour was wantin',
And mournful Corunna, where Moore met his fall,
The fate o' his friend could the Graham never dauntin'
But that of Barossa surpasses them all.

No wonder the French were soon all in confusion,
And fled frae their Eagles wi' terror and shame.
To rally again were the height o' delusion,
Or cope with an army led on by the Graham.

A name sae lang famed in the history of Scotia,
For sake o' that chieftain at Falkirk wha fell,
And now made immortal so late at Barossa,
Which Frenchmen for ages wi' sorrow may tell.

The bluid o' that hero still seems to pervade him,
His name and his valour, his lineage proclaim.
La Pena may blush, that he basely betrayed him,
Or flinch'd frae the side o' a sodger like Graham.

That day he was deaf to the cries o' his nation,
Regardless what shame his misconduct might bring,
While Graham, as a hero, stood true to his station,
And fought like a lion for kintra an' king.

This feat of Barossa, oh! could I explain it,
But language would fail to express what I feel,

To tell how brave Graham, by the point o' the bay'net,
Taught Frenchmen that Britons had plenty o' steel.

Then fill an' we'll drink to this son of auld Scotia,
His name an' his country wi' transport we own,
For know that the hero, wha shone at Barossa,
Was our honour'd chief, gallant Graham of Balgown.

James Duff

There's Somebody, Somegate

O', every Jock has his Jenny,
An' every Meg has her mate,
Tho' some to their coortin' gang canny,
An' some to their willin, come late,
O' waitin' an' wantin' I'm weary,
For I've waited an' wantit sair;
I wish I were somebody's dearie,
Wi' somebody's knee for a chair.

There's somebody waiting me, somegate,
Whaever that somebody be;
There's somebody wantin' me, somegate,
Wantin' an' waitin on me.

I thoct it wis Peter M'Glashan,
Ance on a time, I declare;
I'm sure he was smit wi' love's passion,
An I ettled to catch him wi' care.
But the loon took a lass frae the Tulloch,
A fig for the taste o' a lad
That coo'd me for Maggie M'Culloch,
The freckl'd an' red-heided jaud.

There's somebody waiting me, somegate,
Whaurever that somebody be;
There's somebody wantin' me, somegate,
Wantin' an' waitin on me.

Blithe Alec M'Alister gae me
A sweet-lippit wordie or twa;
Then Johnnie M'Lintoch cam' tae me,
The plewman o' Appleton Ha',
But 'twis but a kiss an' a cuddle,
An' a kindly bit clap gaun by;
The ane marriet Barbara Waddle,
The ither took Jeanie M'Kie.

There's somebody waiting me, somegate,
Whaever that somebody be;
There's somebody wantin' me, somegate,
Wantin' an' waitin on me.

Och hone, it's a weary thing wantin';
I wish that my laddie wid come,
To keep me frae pechin' an' gauntin'
At e'en by the cheek o' the lum.
I carena altho' he's no bonnie,
I carena altho' he's no braw;
Gin he be a man bodie ava.

There's somebody waiting me, somegate,
Whaurever that somebody be;
There's somebody wantin' me, somegate,
Wantin' an' waitin on me.

James Ferguson/Nisbet Noble

The Morning Walk

Beauty, beauty everywhere,
O! mither earth, I long
To gie my swellin' feelings air,
An' pour them forth in song.

Bonnie carpet this afore us,
King nor Kaiser never trod,
Coloured wi' the dyes o' heaven,
Scentit wi' the sweets o' God

The earth lies still in hopeless bliss,
She has and seeks no more,
Forgets that days come after this,
Forgets the day before.

No motion in the deeps of air,
No trembling in the leaves,
A still contentment everywhere,
That neither laughs nor grieves.

A lightning flash, a thunder boom,
Nor sun nor clouds are there;
Our universal acting gloom,
Pervades the heavy air.

The woods are richly, mournfully clad,
Their leaves are red and gold,
Our thoughts in solemn splendour clad,
Signs that the world grows old.

James Ferguson/Nisbet Noble

Truth

Wow! truth has roamed the world lang,
An' focht wi' falsehood hard an' het,
An' whiles in sermon, whiles in sang,
It fechts its sturdy battle yet.
But falsehood's dour and hard to kill,
Strong o' airm an' lang o' wind.
Unblushin' an' undauntit still,
It stalks amang frail human kind.

Great time for truth, when Wallace wicht
An' warlike Bruce its champions stood;
When falsehood swore that Scotia's richt
Was naught compared wi' England's good.
But freedom's facks hae sturdy backs,
An' braid claymores baith sharp an' lang,
An' freedom's walls are fearless sauls –
At least I'll sing sae in my sang.

For truth our fearless fathers focht,
For truth an' richt maun brithers be,
As glorious freedom tartan-boughed
As thundered over land an' sea.
At Stirling brig, at Falkirk toon,
Stood justice wi' her swird and scales;
At Bannockburn the swird cam' doon,
An' fraud an' falsehood turned their tails.

Then Knox arose, and dealt his blows
Against a lee that seemed as fair
As truth to maist – an; tweeked the nose
O' Rome's prood harlot, hard an' sair.
He taucht the warld to own the fack
That heaven was nearer hame than Rome,
That thunderbolts were apt to lack
Their strength, that had sae far to come.

That Popes were hairless cratur's a',
The best o' them nae mair than man,
An' papal bulls nae beasts ava,
Unless when reared in paddy's lan'.
He fearless taucht them richt frae wrang,
An' snapped the cords o' superstition,

Till falsehood grew as weak's my sang,
An' truth arose as strong's my sneeshin'.

It's onward path's a weary road,
It met wi' monie cares an' crosses,
We watch it glimmer bricht an' broad
Amang oor country's moors and mosses.
What time the Covenantin' carles –
Richt worthy sons o' worthy sires –
Drew the dirk for Scotia's kirk,
An' warmed their hearts at Freedom's fires.

Fraud an' force, dour deevils twa,
An' bigotry their neist o' kin,
Cam' armed wi' a' the poo'ers o' law,
To drive distracted conscience blin'.
The faithfu' fled to moors an' rocks,
An' 'neath the bleak unsheltered sky
Death facin', taucht their scattered flocks
The way to worship an' to die.

Around them howled the men o' bluid,
While vows o' vengeance swept the land,
But strong in faith an' richt they stood,
The swird an' Bible hand in hand.
The spirit o' the brave, wha bore
Hard battle-dunts in Freedom's cause,
Upheld them in those days o' sore
Intolerance an' evil laws.

An' tremblin' maids wi' sauls o' braves,
An' grey-hair'd sires on totterin' limbs,
Marched grandly to their martyr graves,
Murmurin' psalms and chantin' hymns.
Truth tauld them o' a hame on high,
Beyond the grave, beyond the flame;
An' baffled falsehood watched them die,
And windered whence the spirit came.

A giant force on fraud unborne
For monie a day, wi' flag unfurled,
Proclaimed wi' falsehood's trumpet horn,
Its triumph o'er a prostate world.
But kilted truth wi' bare claymore,

An' belted plaid an' bonnet blue,
Met falsehood face to face, an' bore
Its legions back at Waterloo.

Hear till it noo, it sings as strong
As ere it sang in days o' yore;
An' falsehood, airm in airm wi' wrang,
Still stalks about frae door to door.
Then gird your loins up, an' give
Your aid to truth, an' falsehood meet
Wi' scorn an' hatred while ye live,
An' trample it beneath your feet.

Tho' fraud an' falsehood dae their best,
Truth will rise an' tower on hie,
Wi' fearless an' upliftit crest,
Beside its brither honestie.
It's sharper far than Sheffield knives,
An' far than Sheffield steel;
Fling falsehood frae ye, men an' wives –
Tall aye the truth an' shame the deil!

James Ferguson/Nisbet Noble

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Ae e'enin' I laid mysel' doon to sleep
'Mang the moss that cushioned a burnie's brim,
An' some eldritch pooer 'gan my senses steep,
An' the munelicht was thrangit wi' shapes fu' grim.

Frae 'neath leaves o' dockens an' ilka grass blade
Cam' unearthly bodies wi' coats o' green,
An' wee red Kilmarnocks on tousled head,
And the wizendest faces that e'er war' seen.

Ilk warlock was hotchin' an' lauchin' wi' glee,
An' they paidl't about an' they wadna be still;
Till a fiddler loon, wi his bonnet agee,
Was cannily stanced in his seat on a hill -

A cosy bit nook in the fair dingle side,
Whar the mune glinted bricht on the dewdraps wat;
But the rest o' the company still couldna bide,
But waitin' the fays, by the burnie sat.

Some leaves o' last autumn cam' sailin' doon,
Ilk riggit wi' moonbeams an' helm o' fate;
An' steered wi' a stalk o' hemlock broon
The barges o' fairies travellin' in state.

It was awesome to see ilk enchantit carle
Handin' out a fair leddy wi' auld farrant grace;
But the bonniest sicht I hae seen l' this warl';
Was the blithesome blink o' ilk fairy face.

Their goons war' o' thistledoon, fa'in' like air,
An' their gems o' the dewdraps' glimmerin' sheen;
An' never a Queen, be she bonnie or fair,
Was drest like thae fairies this midsummer e'en.

They stude l' their places a' ready to reel,
An' the music struck up, an' the dance began;
An' they turned an' linkit and trippit fu' weel,
Ilk fairy white wi' a warlock man.

I turned me aboot to see mair o' the fun,
But a wailin' sough ower the gatherin' fell;

I was fear'd they'd hae meltit like snaw 'neth the sun
Had they kent mortal een lookit' doon on the dell.

So I kept my breath, an' I lay fu' still,
Juist keekin' wi' ane o' my een at the ploy,
Till the fiddler wight frae his seat on the hill
Played up, an' the company fell to wi' joy.

At last a great supper was laid oot at twal
On a patch o' muneshine aneath a tree,
A' deckit wi' wild flooers an' goblets tall,
An' sparklin' wi' red wine fare Normandy.

An' warlocks an' fairies, wi' daffin' an' mirth,
Sat doon to the feast an' the red wine quafit;
I fairly forgot what my silence was worth,
An' clean lost my gumption an' roared an' laucht.

Like the shadowy munelicht they meltit awa',
An' left nae a ribbon to tell o' their joy;
But I'll no be persuadit by ony ava
That I didna tak' part in a fairy ploy.

Jessie M. King

Autumn Thoughts

The year is slowly dying down
In mist and storm into the past,
That seemed at times too fair to last,
So bright it was with beauty's crown.

The glorious sky that round us shone,
The summer fires that gladdened us,
Throughout the long days luminous
Of golden prime, have passed and gone.

The summer trees are leafless now,
And fling their gaunt arms drearily
About the fields and wearily
In autumn breezes creak and bow.

And, oh, my heart is sad and lone,
I mourn the golden summer dead;
I almost think the brown leaves shed
In sadness that can match my own.

On every house, on every tree,
Glad birds of passage sit and sing,
Ready to speed on eager wing,
To summer skies beyond the sea.

Oh, could I leave this misty air,
Where fogs from sluggish marshes creep,
To veil the genial sun, and steep
My soul in southern sunshine fair.

But as I raise my aimless cry,
Some other voices rise to charm,
Some other sights win me from harm,
From wishes which are but a sigh.

I see our northern autumn stand
With blithesome shouts in all its fields,
I see the tints September yields
In largesse to the painter's hand.

Of nut and berry dropping brown,
And scarlet clusters of the ash;

I hear the jocund winds that lash
The bending tree tops' fiery crown.

The see the splendid fires that gild
The evening gateway to the sun,
Telling of crimson honours won,
And life with gen'rous action filled.

And though, in darkness gleaming white,
I see the snowflakes cloud the air,
And frost and ice in masses fair,
Which marks our iron winter night.

I look on those with opened eyes,
Knowing their bleakness holds the spring,
Rising from wintry frosts to bring
Another summer's mysteries.

Jessie M. King

The Perfidious Sea

O fair and fause, like fickle lover,
Grey sea that pratest to the beach,
Say what dark things thy waters cover?
Dead lips that call and hands that reach.

About our feet thou creepest, gleaming,
With serpent grace thy surges glide;
High on the sand thy foam lies dreaming,
And all in calm from tide to tide.

But yesterday, by east wind driven,
Thy waves all white with fear and rage –
Defiant cast themselves to heaven,
Like glove that's thrown in battle gage.

And many a bark that on thy waters
In joyous freedom used to roam
Went down, while trembling wives and daughters
Kept watch for those that ne'er came home.

O midnight dark! O parting vessel!
O human hearts all helpless then!
O drowning cry and dying wrestle!
Far from all aid of fellow-men.

O hearts full-breathed and full of ardour,
Engulfed in dark Lethean deeps;
To-day the sea, our island warder,
Rests peaceful as a child, and sleeps.

Ah, perfidy so cruel, common,
Its waters wooed them to its breast –
Played with them, like capricious woman,
Grew tired of them – and now they rest.

Jessie King

My Grandfather

Hale be thy honest trusty heart,
And hale thy beld and snawy pow,
The hand of eld ne'er furrowed o'er
A baulder or a manlier brow.
The laddie wha was ance thy pet,
Has been in places far awa',
But he thy marrow hasna met
Amang the great nor yet the sma'.

Ance proud eneuch was I to sit
Beside thee in the muirland kirk,
A ruling elder—ane o' weight,
Nae wonder though your oe did smirk
And braw eneuch was I to find
My head the preacher's hand upon,
While by the kirkyard stile he cracked
Of holy things wi' Elder John!

And syne as hame along the muir
I prattling by your side did rin,
Ye mind how ye rebuked thae thochts—
And ca'd them vanity and sin.
But pennies frae your auld breck pouch
Wi' dauds o' counsel ye would gie,
The last war gude—but aye the first
I liket best, I winna lee!

Thy daily fireside worship dwalls
Within this inmost soul of mine:
Thy earnest prayer—sae prophet-like—
For a' on earth I wadna tyne.
And you and granny sang the Psalms
In holy rapt sincerity;—
My granny—dinna greet, auld man—
She's looking down on you and me.

Can I forget how lang and weel
The carritches ye made me read?
Or yet the apples—rosy anes—
I gat to gar me mend my speed?
Can I forget affection's words,
That frae your lips like pearls ran?

Can I forget the heart that prayed
To see me aye an honest man?

And mind ye how we gat us beuks,
And read wi' meikle care and skill,
Until ye thocht this head wad wag
The pu'pit's holy place intil?
For mony an idle whim of mine
Wad my auld father journeys gang;
His auld heart danced when I did right,
And sair it grieved when I did wrang.

But mair than a'—frae beuks sae auld—
Frae mony treasured earnest page,
Thou traced for me the march of truth,
The path of right from age to age:
A peasant, auld, and puir, and deaf,
Bequeathed this legacy to me,
I was his bairn—he filled my soul
With love for liberty!

Be blessings on thy reverend head,
I dinna need for thee to pray;
The path is narrow, but nae een
E'er saw thee from it stray.
God bears his ancient servants up—
He's borne thee since thy life began;—
I'm noble by descent:—thy grave
Will hold an honest man.

Robert Nicoll

Our Auld Hearthstane

Where ance the cozie fire was bien
The winter rain-drap owrie fa's;
My father's floor wi' grass is green,
And roofless are the crumblin' wa's.
Auld thochts, auld times, upon my heart
Are backward rowin' ane by ane:
We'll bow our boughs and hae a crack
About them on our auld hearthstane!

Our laigh cot-house I mind fu' weel:
On ae side mither spinning sat,
Droning auld sonnets to her wheel—
And purring by her side the cat.
Anent was sair-toil'd father's chair,
Wha tauld us stories, sad and lane,
O' puir folk's waes, until we wished
Them a' beside our cosh hearthstane,

And when the supper-time was o'er,
The beuk was tane as it should be,
And heaven had its trysted hour
Aneath that sooty auld roof-tree:
Sync ilka wean was sung to sleep
Wi' sangs o' deeds and ages gane;
And rest was there until the sun
Cam' blinkin' on our auld hearthstane.

Auld stane, had ye a heart to feel,
Ye wad been blithe as ony kitten,
To hear o' ilka sang and reel,
And prank made up while round ye sittin'.
How days o' feastin' cam' wi' speed,
When dubs were hard as ony bane,
How Pace, and Yule, and Halloween
Were keepit round our auld hearthstane.

When winter nights grew white and lang,
The lads and lasses cam' wi' spinning,
And mony a joke and mony a sang
Gaed round while wheels were busy rinnin'.
And syne whan ten cam' round about,
Ilk lasses' joe her wheel has ta'en,

And courting o'er the rigs they gang,
And leave us and our auld hearthstane!

And meikle mair I could unfauld,
How yearly we gat rantin' kirns;
And how the Minister himsel'
Cam duly carritchin' the bairns:
Vow, sic a face! I tremble yet!
Gosh guide's! it was an awfu' ane;
It gart our hearts come to our mouths,
While cawrin round our auld hearthstane!

Weel, weel, the wheels are broken now,
The lads and lasses auld are dead,
The green grass o'er their graves cloth grow,
Or gray hairs theek their aged head.
My parents baith are far awa',
My brithers fechtin', toilin' men,
It warms my heart unto them a',
The sight o' this our auld hearthstane!

When I forget this wee, auld house,
When I forget what here was taught,
My head will be o' little use,
My heart be rotten, worse than naught.
Sin' birds could sing upo' thae wa's,
I've been in chaumers mony ane;
But ne'er saw I a hearth like this,
No, naething like our auld hearthstane.

Hearthstane! though wae, I needna greet,
What gude on earth wad whingeing do?
The earth has fouth o' trusty hearts,
Let him wha doubts it speir at you.
Ae wish hae I—that brither man,
The world o'er, were bluid and bane,
Sic truthfu', honest, trusty chields,
As ance sat round our auld hearthstane.

Robert Nicoll

The Provost

A bare-leggit callant came out o' the north,
And set himself down in our borough,
The loon had a dour and a miserly look,
Folk said he'll no leave in a hurry.
He was twenty-first cousin to some Highland laird,
His tartan was o' the chief's colour;
But nae sort o' wark cam' a-jee to the Celt
If ye made him but sure o' the siller!

He was toiling and earning baith early and late,
Though lazy folk tried to deride him;
He was a' body's servant and a' body's jest—
Fient cared he, if a' body paid him.
His kilt he exchanged for a braw pair o' breeks,
The Gaelic nae langer did snivel;
He began to be likit—had Satan been rich,
To Satan he would ha'e been civil.

He gat him a carritch, and set him to spell
The clans are but so-so at reading;
He soon was a clerk, and a clerk o' the best—
Dour devil! he a' thing cam' speed in!
He bowed and he becket, till by a bit desk
He had come to a safe kind o' anchor;
And ere lang our slee callant was aff to the kirk
Wi' the dochter o' Guineas the banker!

He could lee like an apple-wife—cheat like the deil,
He was surely created for rising:
Although he had died in a baronet's chair
It wadna been naething surprising.
Our Provost was old—he was dotard and blind,
And death took him aff in a hurry:
Syne Banker M'Turk, wi' his pouchfu's o' gowd,
Was exalted to rule o'er the borough.

The Provost had power, and the Provost had sense;
Great folk ga'e him places by dozens;—
He sold them his vote, and they quartered a score
Of his lang-leggit, bare Highland cousins.
He ruled a' the council—the bailies an' a'—

To the land-loupers acted like Nero;
The Provost was siccar—wha lost or wha wan,
Number ane was aye taken gude care o'.

But Death leuket ben wi' a grim angry leuk,
And the wily auld Provost was ended:
Twa opinions divided the feck o' the toun
As to whilk way his spirit had wended.
An auld doited weaver misca'd him fu' sair,
And said he deserved the wae woodie:
He said that o' a Provost!—I'm sure you'll agree,
He maun been but a kae-witted bodie!

Robert Nicoll

The Making o' the Hay

Across the rigs we'll wander
The new-mawn hay amang,
And hear the blackbird in the wood,
And gie it sang for sang;—
We'll gie it sang for sang, we will,
For ilka heart is gay,
As lads and lasses trip along,
At making o' the hay!

It is sae sweetly scented,
It seems a maiden's breath;
Aboon, the sun has wither'd it,
But there is green beneath;—
But there is caller green beneath,
Come, lasses, foot away!
The heart is dowie can be cauld,
At making o' the hay!

Step lightly o'er, gang softly by,
Mak' rig and furrow clean,
And coil it up in fragrant heaps,—
We maun ha'e done at e'en;—
We maun ha'e done at gloaming e'en;
And when the clouds grow gray,
Ilk lad may kiss his bonnie lass
Amang the new-made hay.

Robert Nicoll

The Poets Grave

Is the poets grave in some lonely spot,
Is his requiem sung by the wild-bird's throat,
Where the forest flowers are first in bloom,
Is this the place of the poet's tomb?

Do his bones repose on his native hills,
Is his spirit soothed by their dashing rills,
Where the heather waves and the free winds come,
Is this the place of the poet's tomb?

Is his last, long sleep made in hallowed mould,
Where the bones of his fathers rest of old,
Doth the same grey stone record his doom,
Is this the place of the poet's tomb?

No! alas, bright thoughts of a deathless name,
With o'er-mastering power on his spirit came;
And his childhood's home, and his father's hearth,
He forsook for the busy haunts of earth!

He had dreamed a dream in the moorland glen,
Of oppression and pain 'mongst his fellow men;
He buckled his helmet with clasps of gold,
But fell ere half his tale was told.

Nor tree, nor flower o'er his lowly bed,
Their bright spring tears, or sere leaves, shed,
For, mid countless graves, and a city's gloom,
Sleeps Nature's child, in a nameless tomb.

William Nicoll

The City Pent

I wish I were on a green hillside,
With the breezes round me blowing,
While far beneath is the swelling tide,
With murmurs onward flowing;
To hold free converse with Nature there,
And heavenward mount on the wings of prayer.

Oh! would I were in the forest dim,
For true hearts still 'tis the holiest fane,
When the gay lark carols his matin hymn,
And the echoing woods return the strain, No roof but God's blue sky above me;
None nigh but one true heart to love me.

Oh! that I were in a cottage low
In some far glen, aye there to bide,
With loved ones round me, that dearest grow
Because unloved by all beside.
There wear out, in the joy of the dear caress,
All that life can give of happiness.

Oh! far would I live from the city's din,
Its senseless noise and its sordid care,
Where outside glare hides a dusk within,
And the hollow smile gilds dark despair,
And men barter that God sent-soul away
At the shrine of its image of dross and clay.

William Nicoll

Farewell

Adieu! sweet maid, adieu for ever,
Once how loved let Memory tell;
One fond kiss and then we sever;
One bitter pang, and then farewell.
Yet e'er we part, say will one thought,
One kindly thought e'er turn on him,
Whose early love unstained, unbought,
Made thee the goddess of his dream.

Wilt thou with interest view his path,
Along of life the stormy wave,
Or should he sink beneath its wrath,
One tear shed o'er his nameless grave?
Wilt thou when others loud condemn,
In accents mild defend his name,
Whose heart to thee, if not to them,
Once burned with friendship's purest flame?

E'en should the world's cankerous breath
His name with blighting influence scar,
Wilt thou even in that worse than death,
Remember that he once was dear.
And o'er his frailties draw a veil,
And deem in secret he may mourn?
The heart from purity may fail,
Then seek to hide regret in scorn.

And when another voice is sweet
Unto thine ear, as once was mine,
When other eyes responsive meet
With answering thought each glance of thine.
Oh! think not of me, then I'd be
No rude intruder on thy joy:
But hours like these too quickly flee,
And sorrows come, and care annoy.

But should the hand of sorrow cloud
In coming years that brow so fair,
Though newer scenes may memory shroud,
That sorrow let my friendship share;
But now we part; alas! for ever;

No tie, but that which memory brings
Remains for worldly cares to sever,
And to that tie the heart still clings.

That midst the world's cares and sadness,
I'll think of thee as what thou wert,
My early love, when joy and gladness
Danced gaily through my youthful heart.
Again adieu! again endeavour
To crush the thoughts my bosom swell,
And while this heart forgets thee never,
With bursting sigh I say farewell.

William Nicoll

A Workin' Man's Sang

I'm neither a rich man, nor am I puir;
I work for my livin' like mony ane mair;
My hoose it's no big, but it's cosy an' clean;
Wi my wife an' my bairns, nane are happier I ween.

When I'm thro' wi' my wark at the close o' the day
I get hame wi' pleasure, sae weel as I may;
I ken what awaits me, my wife's cheery smile;
The proverb's a true ane that "Love lichtens toil".

What though on the table nae dainties appear,
I ken oot o' debt the wife likes to keep clear;
Contented am I when I draw in my chair,
For I ken it's a' peyed for; what could I wish mair.

For my comfort the wife toasts my shune at the fire,
Tho' hard be my labour I never feel tire;
When I sit doon at nicht roond my ain ingleside
I'm as happy's a king wi' a queen for his bride.

The bairnies delighted jump up on my knee,
The mither looks on wi' a mitherly e'e;
Wee Pate wants a story, an' Tam wants a sang,
The nicht at its langest is never ower lang.

It's a grand thing contentment – I ken weel mysel'
That men hinna a' the same story to tell;
If ye're no blest like me I hope ye'll no be lang
When wi' pleasure ye'll a sing a "Workin' Man's Sang".

William Paton

Tam M'Glashan's First and Last Bike

Says Tam M'Glashan to his wife,
"The times are guid an' money's rife,
Sae I've been thinkin' I wad like
To buy a braw pneumatic bike".

"Ye'd what?" says Meg, his better half,
"Gae awa' an' dinna mak' folk laugh;
Wha ever thocht that Tam M'Glashan
Wad ever think on sic a fashion.

Ye're gaun yer length, but tak ye care,
Ye hinna mony pounds to spare,
An' ony siller that ye hae
Juist keep it for a rainy day.

Ye'll maybe no aye craw sae croose,
It tak's a lot to keep the hoose;
If ye wad tak' yer wife's advice
Ye'd think ower buyin' a cycle twice,"

"Noo, Meg" quo' Tam, "Ye needna preach,
Frae you I dinna want a speech;
Sae haud yer tongue an' say nae mair,
For what ye say I dinna care.

You women folk are aye the same,
Ye think yer men should bide at hame
An' never get an oor's enjoyment,
When they're through wi' their days employment.

But I'll put up wi' this nae langer,
Sae ye may juist keep doon yer anger;
Ye needna look at me wi' scorn,
A bike I'll hae, an' that the morn."

Tam got his bike, but couldna guide it,
He wanted Meg, his wife, to guide it,
Wi' that she got up in a passion,
An' said, "He weel deserved a thrashin'."

She swore a man o' forty-five
Wha bocht a bike wad never thrive;

To learn the bike Tam tried his best,
For mony weeks he didna rest.

Till ae fine nicht he got a fa'
That made puir Tam sing unco sma',
When he gaed hame Meg got a fricht,
Says she, "Whaur have ye been the nicht?"

Yer heid's as big as my parritch pat,
Ye'll no get on yer Sunday hat;
When ye gae oot the folk'll think
That ye hae been the waur o' drink.

Tam, will ye never learn sense,
This fa' will cost ye mair expense;
I see yer bike's a total wreck,
Yer cyclin's no' a payin' speck;

Ye'll hae a doctor's bill to pay,
Ye winna work for mony a day.
Ye maun gi'e in this very nicht
That you've been wrang an' I've been richt."

"Aweel," quo' Tam, "as man an' wife,
We'll hae nae matrimonial strife;
Just haud yer tongue, my banes are sair,
I ne'er intend to cycle mair;
I maun gi'e in this very nicht
That I've been wrang an' ye've been richt."

William Paton

My Auld Tile Hat

It's been a trusty freen' to me.
I've had it mony a year;
I bocht it when a single chap,
When I had plenty gear.
What tho' it's oot o' fashion,
It's nane the waur o' that;
It's dearer than a croon to me,
My auld tile hat.

The first day that I had it on
The wind was blawin' high,
An' faster than ye'd say the words
My tile away did fly.
I tripped when rinnin' after it,
An' on my face fell flat;
When I rose up I couldna see
My auld tile hat.

Some laddies that were lookin' on
Noo joined me in the chase,
The folks a' wondered what on earth
Could be wrang wi my face.
My Sunday claes were broon wi' mud,
Wi' grief I nearly grat,
I thocht I'd never wear again
My auld tile hat.

It blew across a new ploo'ed field
An' ower a garden wa';
In eager haste I climbed a gate,
Regairdless o' the law.
The watch-dog wi' an angry growl
Flew on me like a rat,
I didna care sae lang's I got
My auld tile hat.

I took it hame an' brushed it
Till it looked as guid as new;
But wi' the rinnin' that I had
The sweat was on my broo.
My face had ta'en the gravel rush,

My heid was like a pat;
I couldna wear for twa-three weeks
My auld tile hat.

Since then I've had it often on
At mony a jolly spree;
An' like a trusty brither
It has aye stuck close to me.
What tho' it's oot o' fashion,
Weel it's nane the waur o' that;
It's dearer than a croon to me,
My auld tile hat.

William Paton

Jenny Sprunt

Doon in the den whaur Benchill burn
Glides past the hamlet o' Ardblea,
Wi' mony a swirl an' windin' turn,
Awa' to feed the drouthy Tay,
There lived into a wee thack hoose
A queer, auldfarrant, gruesome quean;
Her skirlin' tongue crawled aft fu' croose —
Her nose an' chin did a'maist jine.
She had an antic style o' dress:
O' mutches she'd some twa-three score,
A' nicely edged around wi' lace -
She ne'er donned ony less than four.
Her hoose was crammed fu' to the door
Wi' eilden gaither'd on the moor;
There was juist room across the floor
Wi' care a passage to secure.
A num'rous flocks o' hens she kept
O' a' the various kinds ye'd mention;
Inside the hoose at nicht they slept —
Wi' them had Jenny ne'er contention.
They were the only things she loved,
An' tho' her store o' food was scant
A liberal friend to them she proved —
Wad scrimp hersel' ere they should want,
Jenny ower a' the kintra side
Wad wander aft for mony a mile;
Maise grown up fouk she ne'er could bide,
But bairns aye greeted wi' a smile.
When Jenny's faither was alive
She keepit him in due subjection;
Gif he against her wish wad strive
The poker brought him sad reflection.
It chanced a'e nicht, I weel remember,
Lang after James her father's death,
Aboot the end o' bleak December,
She thocht she clearly saw his wraith.
Into oor hoose she flew, puir creature,
Her een juist like twa coals o' fire —
The hue o' death on ilka feature —
Her claes bespattered a' wi' mire.
"Oh, haud my faither!" lood she skirled,
"He wants, och hone! my neck to thraw;"

Then like a peerie roond she swirled,
An' gaspin' quickly swooned awa'.
The shock had fairly turned her brain;
Nae mair did Jenny on us ca',
Or deave us wi' her news again.
Puir Jenny's noo aneath the grass;
Her hoose is nae mair to be seen;
The pleugh an' harrows aften pass
Across the spot whaur it had been.
The burn that tinkled by her door
Still bears her name, thro' use and wont,
The only thing that's to the fore
To mind us o' auld Jenny Sprunt.

John Reid/Pate Pleugh

Maggie Lindsay

When first I Maggie Lindsay met,
Some twenty years and mair,
Fu' quickly did she gain my heart,
She was sae young an' fair.
Her calm, sweet face, her kindly e'e,
Oh, I can ne'er forget;
I muse sae aft upon her charms,
I think I see her yet.

Fate wadna lat oor hands be joined,
Although our hearts were ane;
We had to tread on sep'rate paths
Through this bleak world alane.
Hope sometimes whispered i' my lug,
"Ye dinna ken hoo things may turn;
Ye'll maybe get her yet."

We met short syne, our hands were clasped,
Though scarce a word we said;
We baith were wae to see the change
That Time on each had made;
An' whan we thocht on auld langsyne
Oor een wi' tears were wet;
On Maggie Lindsay's comely face
There's a wealth o' beauty yet.

Noo, we'll no mind the time that's past –
The present time is ours –
An' for the future we will hope
An' trust on heavenly powers.
The bans are published i' the kirk;
The weddin' day is set;
An' what d'ye think? I'm to be wed
(Hooch!) wi' Maggie Lindsay yet.

John Reid/Pate Pleugh

John Clark's Famous Fishing Adventure

There stoppit in ancient Airtully,
'Bout sixty years sin' syne,
A queer, eccentric, knackie billie,
John Clark, a freend o' mine.
John was a batchelor, and he
Wi his auld mither stayed;
A witch he ca'd her aft, and she
O' him was sore afraid.
He was a wheelwright to his trade,
And famed for makin' fiddles:
Brose-caps and cogs he also made,
And weel-frem'd sieves and riddles,
In simmer, whan the trade was slack,
And's croft a' tilled and sawn,
John, basket slung across his back
And fishing rod in haund,
Wad hirple yout to Derrymill
On's ae leg and a stump -
A leg he'd hurt whan young, yet still
Cud sprichtly loup and jump;
And there he'd lash the Tay's clear stream,
For mony an hour on end,
A trout to catch he ne'er wad dream,
Then hamewards he wad wend.
It fell one day by Kercock Brae
As John the Tay was lashin',
Surrounded he wi' cluds o' spray,
Caused by the cast-line splashin';
He sent the hooch richt through his lug,
And there it firmly stuck,
And wi' a' the ruggin' he cud rug
He couldn't oot it pluck.
Auld Wull the fisher chanced to pass,
John hearin' loudly swear,
Drew near, and saw as clear as glass
The cause o' his despair.
"Hoots! man" he said, "ye needna pu'
That wye: ye'll ne'er oot draw't
Tak' aff the buskin, me aloo,
For by the quick it's caught."
"Tak' aff my buskin' shouted John;
" Sic thing I winna dae;

A better hooch was never known
Ower a' the River Tay.
He, tak' my knife and slit my lug,
Then oot it'll aisy come."
This said, he leucked fu' bricht and smug
Before glowered wild and glum.
Auld Wull just did as John advised,
The lug cut open wide,
Relieved the hooch that he sae prized,
Then hame John stumped wi' pride.

John Reid/Pate Pleugh

The Maiden Wha Shore in the Bandwin wi' Me

O bonnie's the heather on Formal hill
When waves the ripe corn aroun' Corrielea!
'Twas there I first saw bonnie Maggie Cargill,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me –
A well-faured young maiden,
A winsome young maiden,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

An' O, but the lassie was gentle and lo'esome!
I ne'er will forget the love-glance o' her e'e;
Her lang raven locks flowin' roun' her white bosom,
A Ruth 'mang the reapers seemed Maggie to me;
A dark-eyed young maiden,
A lovely young maiden,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

Her mien i' the corn-field was gracefu' an' queenly,
Though lowly her kindred aroun' Corrielea;
Native beauty an' grace shone aroun' her serenely:
She was peerless wha shore in the bandwin wi' me –
An artless young maiden,
A matchless young maiden,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

In hairst-time we twa shore the same rig the gither;
At high-twal we rested aneath the same tree;
At e'en fondly pairted, the ane frae the ither,
Near her ain mither's cot richt abune Corrielea;
A loving young maiden,
A guileless young maiden,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

But, ah, cruel Fate! when last autumn had gane,
An' winter storms raged roun' the hills o' Glenshee,
The ill-starred young lassie gaed forth her lea-lane;
Her ewie had strayed far ayont Corrielea.
A tender young maiden,
A kind hearted maiden,
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

We scoured hill an' dale till the gloamin', syne hurried
A search in the glen as far up as Glenshee,

An' there in a snaw-wreath the lassie lay buried -
Ah! lifeless, the maid wha my bride was to be!
Waes me for the maiden!
My loved an' lost maiden!
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

Ceased the storm, an' through the clud-rifts the munelicht fell streamin'
On her face - oh, I'll mind o't whaur'er I shall be!
An' I couldna hae tauld was I wauken or dreamin'
When they bore my deid maid ower the snaw-covered lea
No a tear for my maiden,
Nor a sab for my maiden;
But my hert bruik, an' oh! hoo I wished I nicht dee!

In Ouchterga'en kirkyaird, all under the willow,
She lies wha was sweeter than life unto me;
Sae I will awa' ower the deep ragin' billow,
For Maggie Cargill never mair I shall see!
Alas! the dear maiden!
Alack! the sweet maiden!
The maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me.

Frae scenes o' my youth nae mair joy can I borrow,
Despairin' I wander aroun' Corrielea;
On a far foreign strand I maun hide a heart-sorrow
For the maiden wha shore in the bandwin wi' me;
Then adieu to the maiden!
My fondly loved maiden!
And adieu to the loved scenes aroun' Corrielea!

William Robertson

The Preachin's

The tables were busket wi' linen sae clean,
THE by-ord'nar' stillness crap owre the scene;
Wee laddies sat by, an' wee lassies a wheen —
Hoo their eenie were starin' wi' wonder!

The minister spak' o' the love, "mair than love,"
Whilk fush God's ain Son frae the glory above
To dee on a cross, oor redemption to prove;
An' we cud do naething but wonder!

The elders gaed round wi' the breid an' the wine,
Whilk speak to oor sauls o' His deein divine;
An' we say in oor herts "Evermair Lord, we're Thine,"
An' syne we're a' lost – lost in wonder!

An 'here are auld saunts wi' their heids boo'ed an' grey,
Gettin' rest an' refreshin' frae toil o' the way;
They bless an' they thank Him fu' hertie this day,
Whase faithfu'ness still gars them wonder!

Afore we depairt on oor several ways,
Oor voices are joined in a sweet psalm o' praise;
O for strength'nin' to mind till the end o' oor days
O' the promise we made, rapt in wonder!

William Robertson

The Braes o' Coltrannie

When a' wat wi' dew on a vernal May mornin',
The braes o' Coltrannie are bonnie to see;
At first blink o' daylight the hilltaps adornin',
The muirlan' choirs burst oot wi' rapturous glee;
The braes o' Coltrannie, the braes o' Coltrannie,
The bonnie green braes o' Coltrannie for me!

There Nature her marvellous beauty discloses
In sweet mossy banks an' bricht carpets o' green,
Bedeck'd wi' the violets, blue-bells, an' primroses,
That lustre the woodlands wi' beauteous sheen;
The braes o' Coltrannie, the braes o' Coltrannie,
They're bonnie, the braes o' Coltrannie, I ween.

O sweet are the mem'ries o' innocent childhood,
When 'mang cheery bairns I roamed thae green braes,
Or romped through the brake an' the deep sombre wildwood –
Ah! life then seemed made up o' bricht simmer days;
The braes o' Coltrannie, the braes o' Coltrannie,
I'm fain noo to lilt a bit sang in their praise.

William Robertson

The De'il and M'Ommie

A'e nicht when I ga'e owre my wark,
An' took a range doun thro' the park,
It was na late, but yet was dark
Thro' a' the nation,
For nox had spread his sable sark
Owre the creation.

Syne just as I gaed owre the hicht,
Doun in the howe there was a licht,
That put me in an eerie fricht –
I maist did swoon,
Yet I gaed on to see the sicht,
An' sat me doun.

Syne Hornie did present himsel';
I didna like his seety smell,
Nor could I his likeness tell,
It was sae queer,
He looked as he had been in hell
For mony a year.

"Auld lad," quo I, "ye are na blate,
To pitch your tent on our estate,
I redd you gae some ither gate
Before the morn;
Than you, I'm sure, a greater cheat
Was never born."

"Young man," quo' he "gin that be a
For whilk you do me sae misca',
For reasons are na' worth a flaw;
I winna lee,
Amo' yoursel's there's hunders twa,
Waur cheats than me.

"Witness M'Ommie o' Newmill,
I wish that he may burn his kiln,
For mony a time he's dune me ill,
An' I'm afraid
My cheatin' trade he'll fairly spill,
An' brak' my bread.

“He rides an’ rins to ilka airth,
He squeezes a’ the shire o’ Perth,
He’s the first man that rises dearth
Amo’ the meal;
There’s not a rub like him on earth,
Nor yet in hell.

“Just here upon St Johns-day fair,
He to Perth Borough did repair,
Among meal-sellers raised a steer,
That greedy snake;
He gar’d them hicht their costly ware
Two-pence a peck.

“The worm within his soul shall gnaw,
An’ I without will gie’m the law,
While nane will say for him ‘fu’s a’?
Nor for him care;
I’ll place him in the squeezer raw,
An’ haud him there.”

James Sim

A Soliloquy

And must I die, and leave this earth!
Must I my soul resign
To that great God Who gave me birth,
Infinite and divine?
Must I before the judgment-seat
Of my Creator come?
Where every one, both small and great,
Receive their final doom:
Is heaven prepared for God's elect?
Are sinners sent to hell?
In one of those must I expect
For evermore to dwell?
Yes, true it is that I must die,
And at God's bar appear,
Nor from his presence can I fly,
He's present everywhere,
If I to heaven be doomed to go,
His presence fills the Throne,
Where countless millions, bending low,
Adore the great Three-One.
If I in hell be doomed to spend
Mine endless years in pain,
There sovereign mercy's at an end,
Strict justice then remains.
A fiery deluge God maintains,
From vials of his rage,
That swell through all those dire domains,
And never will assuage.
O thou, my soul, where wilt thou fly
To shun those scenes of horror?
When God Himself's thine enemy,
And every object terror.
Fly to the Saviour, and confess
Thy sins which many be,
Pray that His spotless righteousness,
He may impute to thee.
Lord, bring me to that happy place,
Where doth Thine honour dwell !
Make me a trophy of Thy grace,
Triumphant over hell !
And tune my heart, that I may sing
That sweet celestial song
Which will cause heaven's wide arches ring
Eternity along.

James Sim