

Poems of Robert Burns

A Red, Red Rose (1759-1796)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXH9DVS76yM>

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

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

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
O I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luv'e,
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my luv'e,
Though it were ten thousand mile.

O my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my love's like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my beautiful lady,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till all the seas go dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt with the sun:
O I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands of life shall run.

And fare thee well, my only love,
And fare thee well awhile!
And I will come again, my love,
Though it were ten thousand mile.

The Banks o' Doon (1791)

Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!
Thou'll break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by Bonie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine:
And ilka bird sang o' its Luv'e,
And fondly sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!
And may fause Luv'er staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

You banks and sides of beautiful Doon,
How can you bloom so fresh and fair?
How can you chant, you little birds,
And I so weary full of care!
You will break my heart, you warbling bird,
That flies through the flowering thorn:
You remind me of departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Often have I roved by beautiful Doon
To see the rose and woodbine twine,
And every bird sang of its love,
And fondly so did I of mine;
With lightsome heart I plucked a rose,
Full sweet upon its thorny tree!
And my false lover stole my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn with me.

John Anderson, My Jo (1789)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLuKGirgglS>

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

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

John Anderson my sweetheart, John,
When we were first acquainted,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your handsome brow was straight;
But now your brow is bald, John,
Your locks are like the snow,
But blessings on your frosty head,
John Anderson my joy!

John Anderson my sweetheart, John,
We climbed the hill together,
And many a jolly day, John,
We have had with one another;
Now we must totter down, John,
And hand in hand we will go,
And sleep together at the foot,
John Anderson my joy!

To A Louse

On seeing one on a lady's bonnet at church

(1786)

Ha! Whare ye gaun, ye crawlin ferlie?
Your impudence protects you sairly,
I canna say but ye strut rarely
Owre gauze and lace,
Tho' faith! I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

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

Ha! Where are you going, you crawling wonder?
Your impudence protects you sorely,
I cannot say but you swagger rarely
Over gauze and lace,
Though faith! I fear you dine but sparingly
On such a place.

You ugly, creeping, blasted wonder,
Detested, shunned by saint and sinner,
How dare you set your foot upon her -
Such fine a lady!
Go somewhere else and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Off! in some beggar's temples squat:
There you may creep, and sprawl, and scramble,
With other kindred, jumping cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Where horn nor bone never dare unsettle
Your thick plantations.

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

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

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

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

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's 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!

Now hold you there! you are out of sight,
Below the falderals, snug and tight;
No, faith you yet! you will not be right,
Until you have got on it ---
The very topmost, towering height
Of misses bonnet.

My sooth! right bold you set your nose out,
As plump and gray as any gooseberry:
O for some rank, mercurial resin,
Or deadly, red powder,
I would give you such a hearty dose of it,
Would dress your breech!

I would not have been surprised to spy
You on an old wife's flannel cap:
Or maybe some small ragged boy,
On his undervest;
But Miss's fine balloon bonnet! fye!
How dare you do it.

O Jenny do not toss your head,
And set your beauties all abroad!
You little know what cursed speed
The blastie's making!
Those winks and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takiing!

O would some Power the gift to give us
To see ourselves as others see us!
It would from many a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress and gait would leave us,
And even devotion!

To A Mouse

On turning her up in her nest with the plough, November 1785

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

I'm truly sorry man's dominion

Small, sleek, cowering, timorous beast,
O, what a panic is in your breast!
You need not start away so hasty
With hurrying scamper!
I would be loath to run and chase you,
With murdering plough-staff.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion

Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth born companion
An' fellow mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss't.

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's win's ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld.

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still thou are blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

Has broken Nature's social union,
And justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth born companion
And fellow mortal!

I doubt not, sometimes, but you may steal;
What then? Poor beast, you must live!
An odd ear in twenty-four sheaves
Is a small request;
I will get a blessing with what is left,
And never miss it.

Your small house, too, in ruin!
It's feeble walls the winds are scattering!
And nothing now, to build a new one,
Of coarse grass green!
And bleak December's winds coming,
Both bitter and keen!

You saw the fields laid bare and wasted,
And weary winter coming fast,
And cozy here, beneath the blast,
You thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel plough past
Out through your cell.

That small bit heap of leaves and stubble,
Has cost you many a weary nibble!
Now you are turned out, for all your trouble,
Without house or holding,
To endure the winter's sleety dribble,
And hoar-frost cold.

But Mouse, you are not alone,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes of mice and men
Go often askew,
And leaves us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!

Still you are blest, compared with me!
The present only touches you:
But oh! I backward cast my eye,
On prospects dreary!
And forward, though I cannot see,
I guess and fear!

A Man's a Man for A' That
or
Is There For Honest Poverty
1795

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2pGWkijwOBw>

1.
Is there for honest poverty
That hings his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by --
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

2.
What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that?
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine --
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that,
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

3.
Ye see yon birkie ca'd 'a lord,'
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that?
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a cuif for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His ribband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

4.
A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that!
But an honest man's aboon his might --
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense an' pride o' worth
Are higher rank than a' that.

1.
Is there for honest poverty
That hangs his head, and all that?
The coward slave, we pass him by -
We dare be poor for all that!
For all that, and all that,
Our toils obscure, and all that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gold for all that.

2.
What though on homely fare we dine,
Wear course grey woolen, and all that?
Give fools their silks, and knaves their wine -
A man is a man for all that.
For all that, and all that,
Their tinsel show, and all that,
The honest man, though ever so poor,
Is king of men for all that.

3.
You see yonder fellow called 'a lord,'
Who struts, and stares, and all that?
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He is but a dolt for all that.
For all that, and all that,
His ribboned, star, and all that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at all that.

4.
A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and all that!
But an honest man is above his might -
Good faith, he must not fault that
For all that, and all that,
Their dignities, and all that,
The pith of sense and pride of worth
Are higher rank than all that.

5.
Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a' that)
That Sense and Worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree an' a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's comin yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that.

5.
Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a' that)
That Sense and Worth over all the earth
Shall have the first place and all that!
For all that, and all that,
It is coming yet for all that,
That man to man the world over
Shall brothers be for all that.

Scots Wha Hae (1793)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xlCVnXY4ho>

Scots, Wha Hae.
Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour:
See the front o' battle lour,
See approach proud Edward's power -
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha will fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave? -
Let him turn, and flee!

Wha for Scotland's King and Law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

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

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or dee!

Scots, Who Have.
Scots, who have with Wallace bled,
Scots, who Bruce has often led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victory!

Now is the day, and now is the hour:
See the front of battle loom,
See approach proud Edward's power -
Chains and slavery!

Who will be a traitor knave?
Who will fill a coward's grave?
Who so base as be a slave? -
Let him turn, and flea!

Who for Scotland's King and Law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fall,
Let him follow me!

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

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet (1785)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TavQIUANo0U>

1.

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' drivin' snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely, westlin jingle:
While Frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker, and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

2.

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

3.

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

1.

While winds from off Ben-Lomond blow,
And bar the doors with driving snow,
And hang us over the fireplace,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or two of rhyme,
In homely, westland jingle:
While Frosty winds blow in the drift,
Through to the chimney corner,
I grudge a little the great-folk's gift,
That live so prosperous and snug:
I value less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But yearn, and consumes,
To see their cursed pride.

2.

It is hardly in a person's power,
To keep, at times, from being sour,
To see how things are shared;
How best of young fellows are sometimes in want,
While dolts on countless thousands roister,
And know not how to spend it;
But, Davie, lad, never trouble your head,
Though we have little wealth;
We are fit to win our daily bread,
As long as we are whole and sound:
'More ask not, nor fear not,
Old age never mind a fig;
The last of it, the worst of it,
Is only but to beg.

3.

To lie in kilns and barns at evening,
When bones are crazed, and blood is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Even then, sometimes, we would snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that is free from all
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ball,
Has always some cause to smile;
And mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this not small;

Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae further can we fa'.

4.

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But either house or hal'?
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming years:
On braes when we please then,
We'll sit an' sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till't we'll time till't,
An' sing't when we hae done.

5.

It's no in titles nor in rank:
It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
To purchase peace and rest.
It's no in makin muckle, mair;
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest!
Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.

6.

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

No more then, we will care then,
No further can we fall.

4

What though, like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But without house or hall?
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming years:
On hill sides when we please then,
We will sit and hum a tune;
Then rhyme unto it we will time unto it,
And sing it when we have done.

5.

It is not in titles nor in rank:
It is not in wealth like London Bank,
To purchase peace and rest.
It is not in making much, more;
It is not in books, it is not in learning,
To make us truly blessed:
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blessed!
No treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy long;
The heart always is the part always
That makes us right or wrong.

6.

Think you, that such as you and I,
Who drudge and drive through wet and dry,
With never ceasing toil;
Think you, are we less blessed than they,
Who scarcely consider us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how often, in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting all that is good,
They riot in excess!
Both careless and fearless
Of either Heaven or Hell;
Esteeming and deeming
It is all an idle tale.

7.

Then let us chearfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less
By pining at our state:
And, even should misfortunes come,
I here wha sit hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet,
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill:
Tho' losses and crosses
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

8.

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

9.

O all ye Pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being All-seeing,
O, hear my fervent pray'r!
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

7.

Then let us cheerfully acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less
By pining at our state:
And, even should misfortunes come,
I here who sit have met with some,
And am thankful for them yet,
They give the wit of age to youth;
They let us know ourselves;
They make us see the naked truth,
The real good and ill:
Though losses and crosses
Be lessons right severe,
There is wit there, you will get there,
You will find no other where.

8.

But listen to me, Davie, ace of hearts!
(To say anything less would wrong the cards,
And flattery I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches never could buy,
And joys the very best.
There is all the pleasures of the heart,
The lover and the friend:
You have your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it kindles me,
And sets me all on flame!

9.

O all you Powers who rule above!
O You whose very self art love!
You know my words are sincere!
The life-blood streaming through my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being All-seeing,
O, hear my fervent prayer!
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

10.

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

11.

O, how that Name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin' rank an' file,
Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phoebus and the famous Nine
Were glowrin owre my pen.
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
Till ance he's fairly het;
And then he'll hilch, an' stilt, an' jimp,
And rin an unco fit;
But least then, the beast then
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

10.

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

11.

O, how that Name inspires my style!
The words come spanking rank and file,
Almost before I know!
The ready measure runs as fine,
As Phoebus and the famous Nine
Were looking over my pen.
My spavined Pegasus will limp,
Until once he is fairly hot;
And then he will hobble, and limp, and jump,
And run an uncommon burst;
But least then, the beast then
Should rue this hasty ride,
I will light now, and wipe now
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

Auld Lang Syne (1788)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sc1c54Sd_4

Chorus.

And for auld lang syne, my jo,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne,

1.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' auld lang syne.

2.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp!
And surely I'll be mine!
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

3.

We twa hae run about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wander'd mony a weary foot
Sin auld lang syne.

4.

We twa hae paidl'd i' the burn,
Frae mornin' sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin auld lang syne.

5.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!
And gie's a hand o' thine!
And we'll tak a right guid willy waught,
For auld lang syne.

Chorus.

And for old long past, my dear,
For old long past,
We will take a cup of kindness yet,
For old long past,

1.

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should old acquaintance be forgot,
And days of old long past.

2.

And surely you will pay for your pint-vessel!
And surely I will pay for mine!
And we will take a cup of kindness yet,
For old long past.

3.

We two have run about the hillsides
And pulled the wild daisies fine;
But we have wandered many a weary foot
Since old long past.

4.

We two have paddled in the stream,
From morning sun till noon;
But seas between us broad have roared
Since old long past.

5.

And there is a hand, my trusty friend!
And give me a hand of yours!
And we will take a right good-will drink,
For old long past.