

"To a Mouse, On Turning Up Her Nest With The Plough"
by Robert Burns, November, 1785

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

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

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

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

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,
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 turn'd out for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble
An' cranreuch cauld!

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

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

Notes:

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| 1. sleekit: sleek. | 9. a thrave: twenty-four sheaves. | 16. house or hald: house or habitation |
| 2. bickerin brattle: hurrying scamper. | 10. lave: rest. | 17. thole: put up with. |
| 3. laith: unwilling. | 11. silly: feeble. | 18. cranreuch: frost. |
| 4. pattle: a small long-handled spade. | 12. big: build. | 19. no thy lane: not alone. |
| 5. whyles: sometimes. | 13. foggage: thick grass. | 20. gang aft a-gley: often go wrong |
| 6. maun: must. | 14. snell: piercing. | |
| 7. daimen: occasional. | 15. But: without. | |
| 8. icker: ear of corn. | | |