

## ***To a Mouse***

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

***by Robert Burns***

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' 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, whiles, 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 winds ensuing,  
    Baith snell an' keen!

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

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,  
Has cost thee mony 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;  
 Thy present only toucheth thee:  
 But och! I backward cast my e'e,  
   On projects drear!  
 An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
   I guess an' fear!

### **Glossary**

Agley	<i>off the right line; asquint</i>
Brattle	<i>chatter</i>
Coulter	<i>cutting blade of plough</i>
Cranreuch	<i>hoar frost</i>
Daimen icker	<i>an occasional ear of corn</i>
Foggage	<i>grass</i>
Hald	<i>an abiding-place</i>
Lain	<i>alone</i>
Lave	<i>the rest</i>
Maun	<i>must</i>
Pattle	<i>a plough-spade</i>
Snell	<i>bitter, biting</i>
Thole	<i>to suffer, to endure</i>
Thrave	<i>twenty-four sheaves of corn, making two shocks.</i>