

Classic Poetry Series

Robert Fergusson

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Braid Claith

Ye wha are fain to hae your name
Wrote in the bonny book of fame,
Let merit nae pretension claim
 To laurel'd wreath,
But hap ye weel, baith back and wame,
 In gude Braid Claith.

He that some ells o' this may fa,
An' slae-black hat on pow like snaw,
Bids bauld to bear the gree awa',
 Wi' a' this graith,
Whan bienly clad wi' shell fu' braw
 O' gude Braid Claith.

Waesuck for him wha has na fek o't!
For he's a gowk they're sure to geck at,
A chiel that ne'er will be respekkit
 While he draws breath,
Till his four quarters are bedeckit
 Wi' gude Braid Claith.

On Sabbath-days the barber spark,
When he has done wi' scrapin wark,
Wi' siller broachie in his sark,
 Gangs trigly, faith!
Or to the meadow, or the park,
 In gude Braid Claith.

Weel might ye trow, to see them there,
That they to shave your haffits bare,
Or curl an' sleek a pickly hair,
 Wou'd be right laith,
Whan pacing wi' a gawsy air
 In gude Braid Claith.

If only mettl'd stirrah green
For favour frae a lady's ein,
He maunna care for being seen
 Before he sheath
His body in a scabbard clean
 O' gude Braid Claith.

For, gin he come wi' coat threadbare,
A feg for him she winna care,
But crook her bonny mou' fu' sair,
 And scald him baith.
Wooers shou'd ay their travel spare
 Without Braid Claith.

Braid Claith lends fock an unco heese,
Makes mony kail-worms butterflies,
Gies mony a doctor his degrees

For little skaith:
In short, you may be what you please
Wi' gude Braid Claith.

For thof ye had as wise a snout on
As Shakespeare or Sir Isaac Newton,
Your judgment fouk wou'd hae a doubt on,
I'll tak my aith,
Till they cou'd see ye wi' a suit on
O' gude Braid Claith.

Robert Fergusson

The Daft-days

Now mirk December's dowie face
Glours our the rigs wi' sour grimace,
While, thro' his minimum of space,
The bleer-ey'd sun
Wi' blinkin light and stealing pace,
His race doth run.

From naked groves nae birdie sings,
To shepherd's pipe nae hillock rings,
The breeze nae od'rous flavour brings
From Borean cave,
And dwyning nature droops her wings,
Wi' visage grave.

Mankind but scanty pleasure glean
Frae snawy hill or barren plain,
Whan Winter, 'midst his nipping train,
Wi' frozen spear,
Sends drift ovr a' his bleak domain,
And guides the weir.

Auld Reikie! thou'rt the canty hole,
A bield for mony caldrife soul,
Wha snugly at thine ingle loll,
Baith warm and couth;
While round they gar the bicker roll
To weet their mouth.

When merry Yule-day comes, I trow
You'll scantlins find a hungry mou;
Sma' are our cares, our stamacks fou
O' gusty gear,
And kickshaws, strangers to our view,
Sin Fairn-year.

Ye browster wives, now busk ye bra,
And fling your sorrows far awa';
Then come and gie's the tither blaw
Of reaming ale,
Mair precious than the well of Spa,
Our hearts to heal.

Then, tho' at odds wi' a' the warl',
Amang oursells we'll never quarrel;
Tho' Discord gie a canker'd snarl
To spoil our glee,
As lang's there's pith into the barrel
We'll drink and 'gree.

Fiddlers, your pins in temper fix,
And roset weel your fiddle-sticks,
But banish vile Italian tricks

From out your quorum,
Nor fortes wi' pianos mix,
Gie's Tulloch Gorum.

For nought can cheer the heart sae weil
As can a canty Highland reel,
It even vivifies the heel
To skip and dance:
Lifeless is he what canna feel
Its influence.

Let mirth abound, let social cheer
Invest the dawning of the year;
Let blithesome innocence appear
To crown our joy,
Nor envy wi' sarcastic sneer
Our bliss destroy.

And thou, great god of Aqua Vitæ!
Wha sways the empire of this city,
When fou we're sometimes capernoity,
Be thou prepar'd
To hedge us frae that black banditti,
The City-Guard.

Robert Fergusson

The Farmer's Ingle

Et multo in primis hilarans conviuiua Baccho
Ante focum, si frigus erit, (si messis, in umbra,
Vina novum fundam calathis Ariusia nectar)

Virg. Buc.

Whan gloming grey out o'er the welkin keeks,
Whan Batie ca's his owsen to the byre,
Whan Thrasher John, sair dung, his barn-door steeks,
And lusty lasses at the dighting tire:
What bangs fu' leal the e'enings coming cauld,
And gars snaw-tapit winter freeze in vain;
Gars dowie mortals look baith blyth and bauld,
Nor fley'd wi' a' the poortith o' the plain;
Begin, my Muse, and chant in hamely strain.

Frae the big stack, weel winnow't on the hill,
Wi' divets theekit frae the weat and drift,
Sods, peats, and heath'ry turfs the chimley fill,
And gar their thick'ning smeeek salute the lift;
The gudeman, new come hame, is blyth to find
Whan he out o'er the halland flings his een,
That ilka turn is handled to his mind,
That a' his housie looks sae cosh and clean;
For cleanly house looes he, tho' e'er sae mean.

Weel kens the gudewife that the pleughs require
A heartsome meltith, and refreshing synd
O' nappy liquor, o'er a bleezing fire:
Sair wark and poortith douns weel be join'd.
Wi' butter'd bannocks now the girdle reeks,
I' the far nook the bowie briskly reams;
The readied kail stand by the chimley cheeks,
And had the riggin het wi' welcome steams,
Whilk than the daintiest kitchen nicer seems.

Frae this lat gentler gabs a lesson lear;
Wad they to labouring lend an eidant hand,
They'd rax fell strang upo' the simplest fare,
Nor find their stamacks ever at a stand.
Fu' hale and healthy wad they pass the day,
At night in calmest slumbers dose fu' sound,
Nor doctor need their weary life to spae,
Nor drogs their noodle and their sense confound,
Till death slip sleely on, and gi'e the hindmost wound.

On sicken food has mony a doughty deed
By Caledonia's ancestors been done;
By this did mony wight fu' weirlike bleed
In brulzies frae the dawn to set o' sun:
'Twas this that brac'd their gardies, stiff and strang,
That bent the deidly yew in antient days,

Laid Denmark's daring sons on yird alang,
Gar'd Scottish thistles bang the Roman bays;
For near our crest their heads they doughtna raise.

The couthy cracks begin whan supper's o'er,
The cheering bicker gars them glibly gash
O' simmer's showery blinks and winters sour,
Whase floods did erst their mailins produce hash:
'Bout kirk and market eke their tales gae on,
How Jock woo'd Jenny here to be his bride,
And there how Marion, for a bastard son,
Upo' the cutty-stool was forc'd to ride,
The waefu' scald o' our Mess John to bide.

The fient a chiep's amang the bairnies now;
For a' their anger's wi' their hunger gane:
Ay maun the childer, wi' a fastin mou',
Grumble and greet, and make an unco mane,
In rangles round before the ingle's low:
Frae gudame's mouth auld warld tales they hear,
O' Warlocks louping round the Wirrikow,
O' gaists that win in glen and kirk-yard drear,
Whilk touzles a' their tap, and gars them shak wi' fear.

For weel she trows that fiends and fairies be
Sent frae the de'il to fleetch us to our ill;
That ky hae tint their milk wi' evil eie,
And corn been scowder'd on the glowing kill.
O mock na this, my friends! but rather mourn,
Ye in life's brawest spring wi' reason clear,
Wi' eild our idle fancies a' return,
And dim our dolefu' days wi' bairnly fear;
The mind's ay cradled whan the grave is near.

Yet thrift, industrious, bides her latest days,
Tho' age her sair dow'd front wi' runcles wave,
Yet frae the russet lap the spindle plays,
Her e'enin stent reels she as weel's the lave.
On some feast-day, the wee-things buskit braw
Shall heeze her heart up wi' a silent joy,
Fu' cadgie that her head was up and saw
Her ain spun cleething on a darling oy,
Careless tho' death shou'd make the feast her foy.

In its auld lerroch yet the deas remains,
Whare the gudeman aft streaks him at his ease,
A warm and canny lean for weary banes
O' lab'ers doil'd upo' the wintry leas:
Round him will badrins and the colly come,
To wag their tail, and cast a thankfu' eie
To him wha kindly flings them mony a crum
O' kebbock whang'd, and dainty fadge to prie;

This a' the boon they crave, and a' the fee.

Frae him the lads their morning counsel tak,
What stacks he wants to thrash, what rigs to till;
How big a birn maun lie on bassie's back,
For meal and multure to the thirling mill.
Niest the gudewife her hireling damsels bids
Giowr thro' the byre, and see the hawkies bound,
Take tent case Crummy tak her wonted tids,
And ca' the leglin's treasure on the ground,
Whilk spills a kebbuck nice, or yellow pound.

Then a' the house for sleep begin to grien,
Their joints to slack frae industry a while;
The leaden God fa's heavy on their ein,
And hafflins steeks them frae their daily toil:
The cruizy too can only blink and bleer,
The restit ingle's done the maist it dow;
Tacksman and cottar eke to bed maun steer,
Upo' the cod to clear their drumly pow,
Till wauken'd by the dawning's ruddy glow.

Peace to the husbandman and a' his tribe,
Whase care fells a' our wants frae year to year;
Lang may his sock and couter turn the gleyb,
And bauks o' corn bend down wi' laded ear.
May Scotia's simmers ay look gay and green,
Her yellow har'sts frae scowry blasts decreed;
May a' her tenants sit fu' snug and bien,
Frae the hard grip of ails and poortith freed,
And a lang lasting train o' peaceful hours succeed.

Robert Fergusson