

# The Best Laid Schemes

SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE  
OF ROBERT BURNS

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## To a Mouse

*On turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November, 1785.*

Wee, sleeket, cowran, 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!*

*little, sleek, covering*  
  
*not; away so*  
*with quarrelsome chatter*  
*would; loath; run and*  
*with; 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!*

*and*

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!

*not; sometimes*  
*must*  
*occasional ear of corn; 24 sheaves*  
*small*  
*rest*

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* ensuin,  
    Baith snell an' keen!

*little house*  
*walls; winds; strewing*  
*nothing; build; one*  
*grass*  
*ensuing*  
*both sharp*

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.

*waste*  
*coming*  
*cosy*  
  
*ploughshare*

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!

*little; of; stubble*  
*many*  
*all*  
*without; dwelling*  
*endure*  
*hoar-frost cold*

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!

*not alone*  
  
*of*  
*go often wide of the aim*  
*and leave*

Still, thou art 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!*

*with*  
  
*ah; eye*  
  
*cannot*