

The Vision

Duan First

The sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curless quat their roarin play,
And hunger'd maukin taen her way,
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin-tree,
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And when the day had clos'd his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin;
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae thing,
But stringing blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank and clarkit
My cash-account;
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit.
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring, "blockhead! coof!"
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I henceforth wad be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath-

When click! the string the snick did draw;
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like honest Worth, she blusht,
An' stepped ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace"
Was strongly marked in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
An' such a leg! my bonie Jean
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight an' clean-
Nane else came near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew:
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well-known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were toss't:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r, or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic wheel,

And brandish round the deep-dyed steel,
In sturdy blows;
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel
Their Suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour, mark him well!
Bold Richardton's heroic swell;
The chief, on Sark who glorious fell,
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a scepter'd Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd
In colours strong:

Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancied cove
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,
In musing mood),
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learned Sire and Son I saw:
To Nature's God, and Nature's law,
They gave their lore;
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Brydon's brave ward I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye:
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high,
And hero shone.

Duan Second

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming Fair;
A whispering throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native Muse regard;
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low;
I come to give thee such reward,
As we bestow!

"Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They Scotia's race among them share:
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard - a darling care -
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;

Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence, Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence, Dempster's zeal-inspired tongue;
Hence, sweet, harmonious Beattie sung
His 'Minstrel lays';
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each opening grace,
A guide and guard.

"Of these am I-Coila my name:
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling power:
I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope I oft would gaze
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely, caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes;
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove;
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields and azure skies
Call'd forth the reapers' rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,

To vent thy bosom's swelling rise,
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor I can show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet, all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan:
Preserve the dignity of Man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou this"-she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

[To Mrs. Stewart of Stair, Burns presented a manuscript copy of the Vision. That copy embraces about twenty stanzas at the end of Duan First, which he cancelled when he came to print the price in his Kilmarnock volume. Seven of these he restored in printing his second edition, as noted on p. 174. The following are the verses which he left unpublished.]

Suppressed Stanza's Of "The Vision"

After 18th stanza of the text (at "His native land"):-

With secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood,
And father's air.

An ancient tower to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still, far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who far in western climates fought,
With trusty sword.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The soldier sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water.
I blest that noble badge with joy,
That owned me frater.

After 20th stanza of the text (at "Dispensing good"):-

Near by arose a mansion fine
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crown'd,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurell'd Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourn'd the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonie Whitefoords dwelt;
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;
There Nature, Friendship, Love, I felt,
Fond-mingling, dear!

Hail! Nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm Friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
Not ev'n with life's wild devious path,
Your force shall end!

The Power that gave the soft alarms
In blooming Whitefoord's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny, feather'd arms,
The barbed dart,
While lovely Wilhelmina warms
The coldest heart.

After 21st stanza of the text (at "That, to adore"):-

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I marked busy, bustling Trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a Patroness' aid,
Of noble name.

Wild, countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as wild as they;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polish'd manners dwell with Gray,
In rural ease.

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound;
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamour'd of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly honour'd found,
With knightly grace.

Brydon's brave ward, I saw him stand,
Fame humbly offering her hand,
And near, his kinsman's rustic band,
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near and sandy wilds, I last did note;
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot
At times, o'erran:
But large in ev'ry feature wrote,
Appear'd the Man.