

A Winter Night

When biting Boreas, fell and dour,
 Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
 When Phoebus gies a short-liv'd glow'r,
 Far south the lift,
 Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r,
 Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
 Poor Labour sweet in sleep was locked,
 While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
 Wild-eddying swirl;
 Or, thro' the mining outlet bocked,
 Down headlong hurl:

List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle,
 I thought me on the ourie cattle,
 Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
 O' winter war,
 And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle
 Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird,-wee, helpless thing!
 That, in the merry months o' spring,
 Delighted me to hear thee sing,
 What comes o' thee?
 Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
 An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you, on murdering errands toil'd,
 Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
 The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd
 My heart forgets,
 While pityless the tempest wild
 Sore on you beats!

Now Phoebe in her midnight reign,
 Dark-muff'd, view'd the dreary plain;
 Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
 Rose in my soul,
 When on my ear this plaintive strain,
 Slow, solemn, stole:-

"Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
 And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
 Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
 Not all your rage, as now united, shows
 More hard unkindness unrelenting,
 Vengeful malice unrepenting.
 Than heaven-illumin'd Man on brother Man bestows!

"See stern Oppression's iron grip,
 Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
 Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
 Woe, Want, and Murder o'er a land!
 Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
 Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
 How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
 The parasite empoisoning her ear,
 With all the servile wretches in the rear,
 Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide;
 And eyes the simple, rustic hind,
 Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show-
 A creature of another kind,
 Some coarser substance, unrefin'd-
 Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below!

"Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly Honour's lofty brow,
The pow'rs you proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone?
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares:
This boasted Honour turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears and unavailing pray'rs!
Perhaps this hour, in Misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!

"Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfy'd keen nature's clamorous call,
Stretch'd on his straw, he lays himself to sleep;
While through the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill, o'er his slumbers, piles the drift heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where Guilt and poor Misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view,
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushed low
By cruel Fortune's undeserved blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress;
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing crew.
But deep this truth impress'd my mind-
Thro' all His works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.