

Scots' Prologue For Mr. Sutherland: On his Benefit-Night, at the Theatre, Dumfries.

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
 How this new play an' that new sang is comin?
 Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted?
 Does nonsense mend, like brandy, when imported?
 Is there nae poet, burning keen for fame,
 Will try to gie us sangs and plays at hame?
 For Comedy abroad he need to toil,
 A fool and knave are plants of every soil;
 Nor need he hunt as far as Rome or Greece,
 To gather matter for a serious piece;
 There's themes enow in Caledonian story,
 Would shew the Tragic Muse in a' her glory. -

Is there no daring Bard will rise and tell
 How glorious Wallace stood, how hapless fell?
 Where are the Muses fled that could produce
 A drama worthy o' the name o' Bruce?
 How here, even here, he first unsheath'd the sword
 'Gainst mighty England and her guilty Lord;
 And after mony a bloody, deathless doing,
 Wrench'd his dear country from the jaws of Ruin!
 O for a Shakespeare, or an Otway scene,
 To draw the lovely, hapless Scottish Queen!
 Vain all th' omnipotence of female charms
 'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad Rebellion's arms:
 She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
 To glut that direst foe—a vengeful woman;
 A woman, (tho' the phrase may seem uncivil,)
 As able and as wicked as the Devil!
 One Douglas lives in Home's immortal page,
 But Douglasses were heroes every age:
 And tho' your fathers, prodigal of life,
 A Douglas followed to the martial strife,
 Perhaps, if bowls row right, and Right succeeds,
 Ye yet may follow where a Douglas leads!

As ye hae generous done, if a' the land
 Would take the Muses' servants by the hand;
 Not only hear, but patronize, befriend them,
 And where he justly can commend, commend them;
 And aiblins when they winna stand the test,
 Wink hard, and say The folks hae done their best!
 Would a' the land do this, then I'll be caition,
 Ye'll soon hae Poets o' the Scottish nation
 Will gar Fame blaw until her trumpet crack,
 And warsle Time, an' lay him on his back!

For us and for our Stage, should ony spier,
 "Whase aught thae chiels maks a' this bustle here?"
 My best leg foremost, I'll set up my brow—
 We have the honour to belong to you!
 We're your ain bairns, e'en guide us as ye like,
 But like good mithers shore before ye strike;
 And gratefu' still, I trust ye'll ever find us,
 For gen'rous patronage, and meikle kindness
 We've got frae a' professions, sets and ranks:
 God help us! we're but poor-ye'se get but thanks.