

The Jolly Beggars: A Cantata

Recitativo

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,
 Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,
 Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
 When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte,
 And infant frosts begin to bite,
 In hoary cranreuch drest;
 Ae night at e'en a merry core
 O' randie, gangrel bodies,
 In Poosie-Nansie's held the splore,
 To drink their orra duddies;
 Wi' quaffing an' laughing,
 They ranted an' they sang,
 Wi' jumping an' thumping,
 The vera girdle rang,

First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,
 Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,

And knapsack a' in order;
 His doxy lay within his arm;
 Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm
 She blinkit on her sodger;
 An' aye he gies the tozie drab
 The tither skelpin' kiss,
 While she held up her greedy gab,
 Just like an aumous dish;
 Ilk smack still, did crack still,
 Just like a cadger's whip;
 Then staggering an' swaggering
 He roar'd this ditty up-

Air

Tune-"Soldier's Joy."

I am a son of Mars who have been in many wars,
 And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
 This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
 When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
 Lal de daudle, &c.

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
 When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram:
 and I served out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
 And the Morro low was laid at the sound of the drum.

I lastly was with Curtis among the floating batt'ries,
 And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
 Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,
 I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.

And now tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,
 And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
 I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle, and my callet,
 As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.

What tho' with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
 Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a home,
 When the t'other bag I sell, and the t'other bottle tell,
 I could meet a troop of hell, at the sound of a drum.

Recitativo

He ended; and the kebars sheuk,
 Aboon the chorus roar;
 While frightened rattons backward leuk,
 An' seek the benmost bore:
 A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
 He skirl'd out, encore!
 But up arose the martial chuck,
 An' laid the loud uproar.

Air

Tune-"Sodger Laddie."

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
 And still my delight is in proper young men;
 Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
 No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie,
 Sing, lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
 To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
 His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
 Transported I was with my sodger laddie.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch;
 The sword I forsook for the sake of the church:
 He ventur'd the soul, and I risked the body,
 'Twas then I proved false to my sodger laddie.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
 The regiment at large for a husband I got;
 From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
 I asked no more but a sodger laddie.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
 Till I met old boy in a Cunningham fair,
 His rags regimental, they flutter'd so gaudy,
 My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.

And now I have liv'd-I know not how long,
 And still I can join in a cup and a song;
 But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
 Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.

Recitativo

Poor Merry-Andrew, in the neuk,
 Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler-hizzie;
 They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
 Between themselves they were sae busy:
 At length, wi' drink an' courting dizzy,
 He stoiter'd up an' made a face;
 Then turn'd an' laid a smack on Grizzie,
 Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

Air

Tune-"Auld Sir Symon."

Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou;
 Sir Knave is a fool in a session;
 He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
 But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,
 An' I held awa to the school;
 I fear I my talent misteuk,
 But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck;
 A hizzie's the half of my craft;
 But what could ye other expect
 Of ane that's avowedly daft?

I ance was tied up like a stirk,
 For civilly swearing and quaffin;
 I ance was abus'd i' the kirk,
 For towsing a lass i' my daffin.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
 Let naebody name wi' a jeer;
 There's even, I'm tauld, i' the Court
 A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
 Mak faces to tickle the mob;
 He rails at our mountebank squad, -
 It's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
 For faith I'm confoundedly dry;
 The chiel that's a fool for himsel',
 Guid Lord! he's far dafter than I.

Recitativo

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin,
 Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin;
 For mony a pursie she had hooked,
 An' had in mony a well been douked;
 Her love had been a Highland laddie,
 But weary fa' the waefu' woodie!
 Wi' sighs an' sobs she thus began
 To wail her braw John Highlandman.

Air

Tune-"O, an ye were dead, Guidman."

A Highland lad my love was born,
 The Lalland laws he held in scorn;
 But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
 My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

Chorus

Sing hey my braw John Highlandman!
 Sing ho my braw John Highlandman!
 There's not a lad in a' the lan'
 Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
 An' guid claymore down by his side,
 The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
 My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
 Sing hey, &c.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
 An' liv'd like lords an' ladies gay;
 For a Lalland face he feared none, -
 My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
 Sing hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea.
 But ere the bud was on the tree,
 Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
 Embracing my John Highlandman.

Sing hey, &c.

But, och! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast:
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman!
Sing hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return:
The comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

Recitativo

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trystes an' fairs to driddle.
Her strappin limb and gausy middle
(He reach'd nae higher)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on hainch, and upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an arioso key,
The wee Apoll
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

Air

Tune-"Whistle owre the lave o't."

Let me ryke up to dight that tear,
An' go wi' me an' be my dear;
An' then your every care an' fear
May whistle owre the lave o't.

Chorus

I am a fiddler to my trade,
An' a' the tunes that e'er I played,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns an' weddins we'se be there,
An' O sae nicely's we will fare!
We'll bowse about till Daddie Care
Sing whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily's the banes we'll pyke,
An' sun oursel's about the dyke;
An' at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
An' while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Recitativo

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As weel as poor gut-scraper;

He taks the fiddler by the beard,
 An' draws a roosty rapier-
 He swoor, by a' was swearing worth,
 To speet him like a pliver,
 Unless he would from that time forth
 Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e poor tweedle-dee
 Upon his hunkers bended,
 An' pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
 An' so the quarrel ended.
 But tho' his little heart did grieve
 When round the tinkler prest her,
 He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,
 When thus the caird address'd her:

Air

Tune-"Clout the Cauldron."

My bonie lass, I work in brass,
 A tinkler is my station:
 I've travell'd round all Christian ground
 In this my occupation;
 I've taen the gold, an' been enrolled
 In many a noble squadron;
 But vain they search'd when off I march'd
 To go an' clout the cauldron.
 I've taen the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
 With a' his noise an' cap'rin;
 An' take a share with those that bear
 The budget and the apron!
 And by that stowp! my faith an' houp,
 And by that dear Kilbaigie,
 If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
 May I ne'er weet my craigie.
 And by that stowp, &c.

Recitativo

The caird prevail'd-th' unblushing fair
 In his embraces sunk;
 Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
 An' partly she was drunk:
 Sir Violino, with an air
 That show'd a man o' spunk,
 Wish'd unison between the pair,
 An' made the bottle clunk
 To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
 That play'd a dame a shavie-
 The fiddler rak'd her, fore and aft,
 Behint the chicken cavie.
 Her lord, a wight of Homer's craft,
 Tho' limpin wi' the spavie,
 He hirpl'd up, an' lap like daft,
 An' shor'd them Dainty Davie.
 O' boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade
 As ever Bacchus listed!
 Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,
 His heart, she ever miss'd it.
 He had no wish but-to be glad,
 Nor want but-when he thirsted;

He hated nought but-to be sad,
 An' thus the muse suggested
 His sang that night.

Air

Tune-"For a' that, an' a' that."

I am a Bard of no regard,
 Wi' gentle folks an' a' that;
 But Homer-like, the glowrin byke,
 Frae town to town I draw that.

Chorus

For a' that, an' a' that,
 An' twice as muckle's a' that;
 I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
 I've wife enough for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank,
 Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
 But there it streams an' richly reams,
 My Helicon I ca' that.
 For a' that, &c.

Great love Idbear to a' the fair,
 Their humble slave an' a' that;
 But lordly will, I hold it still
 A mortal sin to thraw that.
 For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
 Wi' mutual love an' a' that;
 But for how lang the flie may stang,
 Let inclination law that.
 For a' that, &c.

Their tricks an' craft hae put me daft,
 They've taen me in, an' a' that;
 But clear your decks, and here's-"The Sex!"
 I like the jads for a' that.

Chorus

For a' that, an' a' that,
 An' twice as muckle's a' that;
 My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
 They're welcome till't for a' that.

Recitativo

So sang the bard - and Nansie's wa's
 Shook with a thunder of applause,
 Re-echo'd from each mouth!
 They toom'd their pocks, they pawn'd their duds,
 They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
 To quench their lowin drouth:
 Then owre again, the jovial thrang
 The poet did request
 To lowse his pack an' wale a sang,
 A ballad o' the best;
 He rising, rejoicing,
 Between his twa Deborahs,
 Looks round him, an' found them
 Impatient for the chorus.

Air

tune-"Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses."

See the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing-

Chorus

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title, what is treasure,
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig for, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig for, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig for, &c.

Life is al a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have character to lose.
A fig for, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train.
Here's our ragged brats and callets,
One and all cry out, Amen!

Chorus

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.